

ART

VARIANT

IDEAS

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No. 5 Summer/Autumn 88



ARTISTS

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Discarded Sculptures/Order Out Of Chaas
The Cenataph Praject - Class Of Rulers
Billbaard Interventions
The Destruction Of Art As An Institution
Pavel Buchler
The Festival Of Nan-Participation - Scotland
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VARIANT aims to:

document new areas of artistic endeavor in Scotland
discuss art in a social and political context
promote diversity through experimental art

VARIANT welcomes contributions in areas of art, ideas and theory. Artists' items/pages are also sought. Advance publicity for events is required if they are to be covered adequately. Galleries and organisations are asked to place VARIANT on their mailing lists. Unsolicited material cannot be guaranteed publication, though the editor will endeavor to reply to all items of correspondence. An SAE should be enclosed for return of material/photographs.

All text must be typed in double spacing with accompanying visual material provided (if applicable).

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Front cover: detail of billboard intervention at Comberland Road, Gorbals, Glasgow by Roderick Buchanan (see middle pages).

EDITORIAL

"WHAT IS vital for us in tradition is not merely, as we are so often told, that it is our past, but that we make certain the same spark that once gave it life can be struck anew by us to give us life in our own time. Otherwise it is just a cloying encumbrance, a nostalgic wank, an academic pastime. It should speak to us of resistance to the official fakery of the State in all its manifold forms (even if it is only to invent a fakery of our own but one that opens up the world for all the people everywhere and gives our best and most creative energies the possibility of fulfilment); it should speak to us of revolt against the oxbow authority has yoked us in, in body as well as spirit, where we can stand duped by fear and distrust of our own selves, fit only for eager subservience and our only song a hosanna to hierarchy; and it should speak to us of the one struggle worthy of every man and woman today, as it has been throughout all ages past - the struggle for the ultimate social, cultural and economic integrity of all human kind." Farquhar McLay, introduction to *Workers City*, Clydeside Press, 1988.

THE CITY of Glasgow, its history and its people, have always demonstrated a presence of the progressive strains of working-class culture which has been systematically suppressed by political parties and business interests, by bourgeois nationalists and left-wing dogmatists contemptuous of working-class culture. *Workers City*, published June 1988, combines prose, poetry and writing from such people as J. T. Caldwell, J. D. Young, Hamish Henderson, Dominic Behan and R. D. Laing, and it illuminates a history of Clydeside as one of collective resistance to the forces of capitalism, oppression and state bureaucracy. Though containing some historical essays, the book expresses a current and widespread creative discontent against the re-packaging of Glasgow in the run-up to becoming European City of Culture in 1990. Whilst benefits might be gained, it is very remote from the reality of life in the peripheral housing schemes, where miserable social conditions stand in juxtaposition to the new wealthy opulence of the city centre, where wine bars crop up by the week and derelict

railway yards become yuppie dream homes for incoming residents. It is no wonder that art and culture can have little interest to that growing underclass excluded from participation in this new Renaissance beyond limited street entertainment encountered on a rare visit to the city centre. The role of art has been important in the PR exercise with, as McLay puts it, "lots of imported music, opera and ballet, sepulchral museums, high-priced paintings and a civic theatre devoted entirely to classics - pale ghosts of revolt in other places, at other times - in a word, the kind of art that is no real threat to the social reality of the present..."

Rob Brown calls this book a spectre arriving at the feast (*The Scotsman newspaper*, 16/6/88) which seems an appropriate analogy for the appearance in early June '88 of the date '1919' on the grass in George Square. This refers to the period of industrial strikes when thousands gathered outside the City Chambers in George Square as the Red Flag was raised. The date '1919' again appeared on the grass nearby Nelson's Column in the 'people's park' Glasgow Green, as if that history is again fighting back.

* * * * *

These actions/gestures have been brought to Variant's attention and an anonymous statement delivered by post has been printed here. As a footnote end as a potential starting point, photographs from the Bulletin newspaper from January and February 1919 are reprinted in this issue.

* * * * *

The spaces of our national, class and racial identities are addressed throughout this issue of *Variant*, whether it be the articulation of a critical/imaginative space or the loss or attacks upon it. Ideas are expressed in relation to impermanent site-specific art work, art in the environment, collaborative activity, critical theory and artists' publications.

The loss of historical consciousness and a socialist world-view are addressed through *The Cenotaph Project* and in

Allison Marchant's 'Heritage' series. Both are concerned with addressing issues pertaining to particular periods in recent history, the former to the period of the First World War and 1919 (when the Whitehall Cenotaph) was built and beyond, the latter to the Bryant and May Match Women's strike of 1888 in London. These approaches go beyond the restrictions and historical misrepresentations of social realism by allowing events and people's voices to speak for themselves (the artists uncovering these voices through a process of critical inquiry).

The substitution of the public for the private realm of commodity culture is where **Roderick Buchanan** has made a necessary intervention. An illegitimate activity, in that no permission should be sought when engaging the language of advertising (in the way Projects U.K. or Artangel Trust might commission artists' for such sites), his billboard stencils defuse and subvert the subliminal order to 'consume'. The passive consumption of life's image through the commodity is therefore transformed into a political decision against it. In the photograph depicting the subversion of the Kit-Kat advert displaying the monolithic dominance of the commodity over the individual, the image is doubly ironic: in the background the demolition of Hutchesontown is underway and the end of one of Glasgow's biggest housing diasters in terms of bad planning on behalf of an allegedly socialist council. The message on the poster is direct in exposing the hypocrisy of those deemed to house and administer the population without democratic participation in those decisions. Whilst the all-pervasive saturation of the media makes us experience life as an unreality, the story of 'Hutchie E' illustrates the real lack of control people have over the conditions of their lives, environment and culture. The article on the *Glasgow Garden Festival*, whilst not overtly critical, it too asks the question of who is in control of decisions that affect others, and who they might be accountable to. Written by a participant in the Festival, it sets out the processes by which it came into being and contributes to the questioning of media concepts of leisure in a time of demoralisation but much publicised proclamations of change to the city.

A supportive culture of opposition, for debate and collaboration between artists is anathema to dominant notions of an 'art world' defined by the exchange in high-priced commodities and with the Saatchi Collection at its vulgar pinnacle. In reviewing **Stefan Szczelkun's** book **Collaborations**, **Alex Richards** points out the growing "interrelated network of art activists" of which Szczelkun, the reviewer, this magazine and the following group projects are all a part. **Discarded Sculptures/Order Out of Chaos** attempted and succeeded in "a unification of activities, initiated by artists, that can take up their social role by more effectively consulting both audience and practitioner through the sharing of ideas and experience" as **Paul Haywood** puts it in his piece on the project.

This independent and mutually supportive way of working has similarities in **The Festival of Non-Participation** occurring in Scotland and in the **Festival of Plagiarism**, the London festival discussed here having occurred in early '88, and which was the substance of an article by Bob Jones in Variant 3.

'Discarded Sculptures' was characterised by environmental artworks, The Festival of Non-Participation aims to extend that art base into diverse oppositional groups and lifestyles. The two projects and **A.F.T.E.R. (Artists for the Environment in Rochdale)** which is also included here, share a concern for the environment, and an unwillingness to accept the activity as marginal and therefore seemingly worthless. Furthermore, as **Howard Slater** states in his piece on 'Discarded Sculptures': "ideas and processes take preference over a regard for materialism and art as commodity".

The modes of production and consumption are therefore engaged through theory and through the art and how it operates 'in the world'. In his article on The Festival of Plagiarism, **Ed Baxter** writes: "consumption of art currently has a productive dimension, in that it tends to reproduce the conditions which sustain the commodity culture... what is important is how a commodity is consumed, not the fact that it is consumed." Baxter's critical position (he was an organiser and participant in the Festival) is one which is able to engage itself, to question its assumptions and motives and how it perceived its 'projected audience'. This contributes to future endeavors in attempting to embrace "diverse expressive vocabularies".

Such endeavors require a fundamental change in how cultural producers perceive their roles and what an audience might be. Similar to Baxter, **Peter Suchin** emphasises the role of an active recipient

in place of the passive audience in the production and reception of cultural artifacts. In **The Destruction of Art as an Institution: the role of the Amateur**, he takes a number of theoretical assertions to suggest that art is a bourgeois construction and that the task of theory is to destroy the authority invested in the activity and the term 'art' as defined by 'serious culture'. Via Barthes' 'Death of the Author', Suchin suggests the artwork be open to 'multiple interpretations' through the interacting forces of author/reader.

The closure of 'diverse expressive vocabularies' is advocated in **Modern Painters**, a magazine edited by critic and ex-socialist Peter Fuller, and is part of an intellectual attack on 'progressive critical culture'. By supporting a return to tradition through the medium of painting, **Modern Painters** can find much sympathy in the present reactionary period where 'suppression of a range of experimental/postmodern/avantgarde art' is achieved as **Paul Wood** says in his review "by the simple device of cutting public funds". In comparison and in opposition, **Third Text** magazine supports diversity within a critical framework which analyses how dominant culture (largely white, mostly male) polarises difference for the purpose of exclusion. **Lorna Waite**, reviewing the first and second issues, writes that **Third Text** acknowledges a multiplicity of practices and critical debate. She writes: "This means the affirmation of a syncretic culture which cannot be done without protest, agitation or the acceptance of the pluralities of histories and methods of cultural expressiveness outwith that which is valued by fine art institutions and reactionary politicians."

Elsewhere in Variant 5, visual contributions, artists' writing, critical opinion and documentation and that which is imaginative are combined in what aims to be as much an artists' publication as forum for debate. If conventional art criticism and magazines are redundant and lacking vision, then there are many other issues we can devote ourselves to and many artists' activities still go unnoticed. Variant is not about a certain position as of a whole number of positions which are horizontal in context. The magazine as pretext to greater activity and expressiveness is not only proposed and practiced, but anticipated through wider cultural practice.

Editorial note: Thanks to the authors who contributed without a fee but as a gift towards furthering thought. Also for Peter Horobin's and Louise Crawford's comments, Nicky White's assistance on a difficult article, Lorna Waite's research into The Bulletin, and for Alison Marchant's letters. To Carol Rhodes, Peter Thomson, Scott Paterson, Alison McLeod and Gordon Muir for final collation of this issue.

Contributors to this issue: **TIM BRENNAN** is an artist based in Hull. He is a member of the Art Works group. **ALISON MARCHANT** is an artist living in London. She has been involved in many group projects, the most recent being an exhibition titled 'Heritage' which involved artists from the North-West and from London working on aspects of the urban environment. It was shown at Franklin Furnace, New York. **PAUL HAYWOOD** is an artist based in Rochdale. He was included in the 'Heritage' group show mentioned above. **HOWARD SLATER** is an artist living in London. He is an organiser of 'Discarded Sculptures' and recently participated in the 'Heritage' group show mentioned above. **PETER HOROBIN** is an artist living in Dundee where he operates from the Data Attic which is a cell for correspondence and alternative art. **RODERICK BUCHANAN** is an artist living in Glasgow. **KAREN ELIOT** is a multiple name employed by several individuals. **LOUISE SCULLION** graduated in 1988. She is currently exhibiting a work in the Glasgow Garden Festival and will be exhibiting at the Third Eye Centre in August. **JAYNE TAYLOR** is an artist based in Glasgow. She recently exhibited at the Third Eye Centre. **PAVEL BUCHLER** is a Czech-born artist living in Britain since 1981. The work discussed here was first shown in the 'Monumental Works' exhibition at St. Georges Crypt, London 1988. His installation 'Untitled Portraits' was exhibited at the Third Eye Centre June/July 1988. **CHRIS TITTINGTON** is a research assistant in the Collection of Prints of the Victoria and Albert Museum. He has curated numerous exhibitions at V & A and elsewhere. **PETER SUCHIN** is an abstract painter and writer living in Leeds. He has previously published in Art Monthly, Here and Now and in Variant 4. **ED BAXTER** is a writer and publisher and he co-runs Counter-Productions in London. He exhibited in Glasgow last year as part of the Desire in Ruins group show at Transmission. He is the author of 'Fifth' published last year. **LORNA J. WAITE** is a writer living in Edinburgh. **PAUL WOOD** is a writer living in Edinburgh. He regularly contributes to Art Scribe International. His critique of 'realist painting' is published in the current Edinburgh Review. **STEWART HOME** is a writer and researcher living in London. He was organiser of the 1988 Festival of Plagiarism and he has just published his book 'The Assault on Culture - utopian currents from Lettrism to Class War', available through Counter-Productions. **ALEX RICHARDS** is a pseudonym.

Mounted Police Charge: Many Casualties: Batons Used Freely WILD RIOTS IN GLASGOW

Two Strike Leaders Arrested

Friday, January 31, 1919

WILD SCENES were witnessed in George Square, Glasgow, to-day, shortly after noon.

While the deputation were in the City Chambers interviewing the Lord Provost the crowd refused to allow the tramcars to proceed, and after several warnings the police charged the crowd with their batons. Many people were injured, and eventually the Riot Act was read.

This was followed by a scene unparalleled in the history of the city. Bottles which had been seized from lorries in adjoining streets were thrown at the buildings and in the direction of Sheriff Mackenzie, as he was engaged in reading the Riot Act. The Act was torn from his hand, but the Sheriff continued to finish the reading of it from memory. In the course of the melee one of the Assistant Chief Constables and Sheriff Mackenzie were hurt by the flying missiles.

QUIET RESTORED.

Immediately following this, mounted police, who had been held in reserve in the quadrangle of the City Chambers, emerged from both sides of the building and charged the crowd, and very quickly cleared a thoroughfare in front of the main entrance of the building. Many casualties occurred among the crowd, and several police officials and others were injured. Following upon the charge by the mounted police, the policemen on foot continued to use their batons freely, and very soon the Square was restored to comparative quietness.

A first estimate put the number of injured at 30 including the Chief Constable, who was slightly hurt, and four constables who are in the infirmary.

Mr Neil Maclean, M.P., along with Bailie Wheatley, interviewed the Lord Provost with a view to securing the release of William Gallagher, who had been arrested, and also of David Kirkwood, who had been carried inside the building rather badly hurt, but in this they did not seem to succeed.

After the baton charge and the consequent clearing of the Square, Mr Neil Maclean, M.P., approached the authorities, and asked them to at least allow Gallagher and Kirkwood to address the crowd. This request was granted, and the two men spoke from one of the windows of the Town Clerk's Office, Kirkwood with his head in bandages. There was great cheering when the men appeared, and it was some time before order was restored, the crowd swinging forward to hear.

MEN'S LEADERS' APPEAL: "FOR GOD'S SAKE LEAVE THE SQUARE".

Gallagher said: Understand me, it has been a very unfortunate occurrence. We appeal to you to get into order, and on the march away from here for your own sakes. We (meaning Kirkwood and himself) are all right. He intimated that a number of discharged soldiers would lead the strikers to Glasgow Green, or elsewhere where the situation could be discussed. He addressed a final appeal as follows: Get into order, for God's sake, and march. Are you going to do that much for us?

Kirkwood said he believed it was in the best interests of the men that they should go away from the Square. He advised at the moment, and leave the Square, and we will see what will happen later on.

The crowd subsequently did as advised, and gradually cleared out of the Square.

Conflicts between the strikers and the police on their way from George Square to Glasgow Green took place at Glasgow Cross and to the Saltmarket. In the latter thoroughfare, which adjoins Glasgow Green, a mob boarded several tramway cars and pulled the trolley poles from the overhead wires, bringing the vehicles to a standstill. The trolleys were afterwards put out of action and the windows smashed. Several of the passengers had narrow escapes.

The police charged on the crowds and forced them to make an escape to Glasgow Green, where they were addressed by, among others, Mr Neil Maclean, M.P.

EXTENSIVE LOOTING.

In other sections of the city looting took place on an extensive scale. The windows of a tobacconist's shop in Rintfield Street were smashed, and a large quantity of tobacco, cigars, etc., of an estimated value of £100 was stolen. In Paisley Road the mob smashed the windows of a jewellery shop and stole jewellery to the value of £2000. The jeweller, who went out when the window was smashed to try and keep the crowd back, was killed, and his head badly cut. In connection with the latter incident an arrest has taken place.

This afternoon Kirkwood, one of the leaders, was brought to the Central Police Office and was charged with inciting to riot, and was continued in custody.

The Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress to-day wired Mr Bonar Law, asking him that



The Red Flag is raised outside Glasgow City Chambers.

AS INDUSTRIAL unrest swept through Clydeside and the Central Belt in 1919, a deputation of strikers asked Glasgow's Lord Provost to urge the Government to intervene. On January 31, thousands gathered in George Square to hear the Prime Minister's reply.

THE LEADERS ARE BOLSHEVIKS AT HEART

Saturday, February 1, 1919.

THE "Daily Chronicle", discussing the strike, says: Disorders of this character had never occurred within living memory in Scotland's largest city. The Scots are an orderly people. There are, however, considerable, non-uniform elements among the Glasgow workers, as illustrated by the fact that the moving spirit in the local agitation is a Polish Jew, and some of the others are Irish.

The authors of the strike are the same men who repeatedly tried to bring Clydeside war work to a standstill during the war, and they have made on secret of their belief in violent methods generally or of their particular sympathy with the methods and aims of the Russian Bolsheviks. British trade unionists will be very ill advised if they allow themselves to be carried away into supporting them.

The "Times" says: The men on strike in Belfast and Glasgow are the unconscious instruments of a planned campaign drawn up by "intellectuals" in the background, who desire to emulate Lenin and Trotsky and the "Spartacus" leaders in Germany.

The "Morning Post" says: It is not merely an industrial movement. It is an attempt at revolution.

REVOLUTION THAT FAILED

Military Ready: Another Leader Arrested

THE LATEST developments arising out of the Glasgow strike riots are the arrest of Emmanuel Salawell (the principal leader in the agitation), and the establishment in the vicinity of the municipal buildings of fully equipped military guards ready to suppress instantly any further outbreak by the mob.

This precaution was, no doubt, in the mind of Lord Provost Stewart last night when, at a public meeting in the city, he issued a grave warning to the revolutionary element. "The authorities in Glasgow," he said, "will not shirk their duty. The resources of civilisation are not yet exhausted."

We learn from a special correspondent in close touch with the situation, that, in the opinion of competent authorities, the strike movement has failed. There has been little or an accession of willing strikers to the riots since Monday.

A strong cleavage of opinion has also occurred in the Joint Strike Committee, and the arrest of the leaders is further expected to bring the outbreak to a speedy finish.

Soldiers With Fixed Bayonets

AFTER yesterday's strike scenes Glasgow has not gained much of its normal appearance. Indications of damage at various points, however, show the gross disorder which has prevailed.

The arrival of the military has tended to relieve any further anxiety, as armed soldiers are on guard in and around the City Chambers, and at other parts of the city.

The strike offices have not been reopened and in the enforced absence of the leaders, three of whom are now in the hands of the police, no further procession has been arranged.

There was no suggestion of a recurrence of the disorders, though the military with fixed bayonets readied on duty at the more vulnerable points.

It has been left to a London newspaper to express surprise that Scotsmen, usually an orderly class should allow themselves to be led by a Polish Jew and by Irishmen who make an secret of their sympathies with the methods and aims of the Russian Bolsheviks.

Further disorderly conduct took place in George Square, Glasgow, last night, rioters being thrown at the police on duty outside the City Chambers, and several shop windows in other parts of the city being smashed.

Mr Lloyd George replying to a message from Mr Devlin requesting Government intervention in the Belfast strike, declines to take action, saying he is in complete accord with Mr Bonar Law and with the reasons which have induced the Government not to interfere in Glasgow. These reasons apply equally to Belfast.

There are signs that in other parts of the country the strike fever is subsiding. The Rosyth strikers have decided to resume work on Monday, and a similar course is expected to be followed by the Dunfermline shipbuilders and engineers.

“We were carrying on a strike when we ought to have been making a revolution.”

Willie Gallacher



THE EVENTS on the Clyde during 1919 are now largely consigned to brief words and footnotes in the history books, yet the true significance and meaning of history lies deep within the ground on which we stand.

Glasgow's Garden Festival presents a cosmetic mask on the smiling face of Glasgow, treats the very surface of the earth and obscures the realities beneath with that thinly disguised concoction of greed and sentiment, prejudice and deception with which Thatcherism seeks to 'remedy the maladies' of this awkward people, the Scots. In recent weeks an attempt was made at three locations in Glasgow to encourage the appearance of history - 1919 - to show itself once again emerging from the ground in which it lies.

Controlled growth - selective memory. Who is in control?

The date 1919 has been encouraged to grow in Kelvingrove Park and Glasgow Green and burned into the ground in the south east corner of George Square.



After the battle . . . Gallacher in bandages, Kirkwood held by the police.

"Bloody Friday", January 31st, 1919.
Cutting from Contemporary newspaper.

THE CENOTAPH PROJECT CLASS OF RULERS

by *Tim Brennan*



"Could it be that expressions of consensus through the use of shared imagery is one of the answers preferred to the problem of 'law and order'?"

It is worth to note that the fear of Bolshevism abroad and at home, the open dissent within the army were the real problems facing the Lloyd George coalition government at the end of 1918. Serious national problems, including economic recession and labour unrest were threatening the fabrics of the democratic tradition.

Could we argue that the relationship between the class of rulers and the rest of society, though unequal, cannot be as naked force—that naked force is inadequate to construct order and that power relationships by themselves are likely to create conflict. The exercise of authority therefore has to be mediated through commonly recognised symbols...

... The public monument in itself symbolises a specific set of conditions all brought to bear in the form of a monument, which also represents another set of relationships between the state, the class of rulers, and the rest of society. The Cenotaph is a typical example. It stands somewhere between the categories of architecture, monument and sculpture. It represents through its form as the 'empty tomb' all those who died in the 1st, 2nd and all subsequent wars fighting for the causes of the 'nation'." Artists notes September 1987.

★ 'The Cenotaph Project' - Installation detail, Jura Mill, Dean Clough. Photo: Guzelian.

Using the Whitehall Cenotaph as a model, 'The Cenotaph Project' by Stuart Brisley and Moya Balcioglu sets out to examine the role of public sculpture as the possible embodiment of a ruling class's authority over the rest of society, and to open up a discussion of issues relating to such. The project has been exhibited in several sites previously (where issues pertaining to its locality were explored), and is being placed in Govan, Glasgow in July/August 1988. Here the history of the shipbuilding community, its relation to the 1st and 2nd World Wars, and the role of the workers movements in Clydeside will be opened up. Thereafter the project moves to Derry, where a whole new set of issues and questions will emerge.

The following is heavily edited from a thesis by Tim Brennan which takes account of the projects' placement up until November 87. Wherever possible, original grammatical construction has been maintained.

PART 1

'The Cenotaph Project' is a collaborative work by the artists **Stuart Brisley and Maya Balcioglu** (1) which sets out to provoke discussion about the role of public monuments. The Whitehall Cenotaph which was erected in 1919 to commemorate the dead of World War One, on which the project is based and which is its central image, is a typical example. The project attempts to show that the Cenotaph (and other public sculptures) serve other purposes, namely that public monuments are manifestations of the authority exerted by the ruling class over the rest of society.

"The Cenotaph Project" seeks to open an argument concerning the relationship between the state, - the society - the artist, through an investigation into the nature and condition of the public monument". Artists notes, September 1987

'The Cenotaph Project — Class of Rulers' as an installation/archive has appeared at: Gateshead, a council flat in St. Cuthbert's Village (April 1987); Cambridge University, Kettlesyard Gallery (May 1987); Halifax, in the Jura Mill, Dean Clough (November 1987); London, Chisenhate Gallery (December 1987) and in Portsmouth, Aspex Gallery (May 1988).

In the project, Brisley and Balcioglu have attempted to integrate photo-text, sculpture, site-specific installation and the notion of the found object. The focal points of 'The Cenotaph Project' are one-fifth scale models of the Whitehall Cenotaph. Each model is made with chipboard, an inexpensive material, and they are painted a neutral dove grey and are placed in site-specific locations. Each time the project moves on to a new location, a new model is constructed and is placed alongside the existing cenotaphs.

The project first placed a cenotaph in an empty council flat in Gateshead. The living space is part of a complex of 1960's built flats called St. Cuthbert's Village. At Kettlesyard Gallery, Cambridge, a single cenotaph was shown alongside a quote from a section of Virginia Woolf's diary. The project moved to Halifax in November 1987.

Dean Clough is a derelict Victorian wool and carpet factory situated near the centre of Halifax (the last carpet was made there in 1986) and it consists of a network of large multi-storied warehouses. The complex has just been re-opened as a site for light industry development where many small private firms can be based. The Jura Mill in Dean Clough is still empty and is in a state of delapidation. The mill consists of one large warehouse area approximately 50 yards long with a high ceiling measuring approximately 80 feet. Other small rooms lead off from this large hall like room.

Brisley and Balcioglu put two cenotaphs in different ante-rooms. In one of these rooms the windows were painted grey so the dissipated light barely illuminated the grey cenotaph. The other room, which has no windows, is triangular in shape and was only wide enough to accommodate the cenotaph's base.

The question of permanence is an important one in relation to the project. By placing temporary wooden 'cenotaphs' in site-

specific locations, Brisley and Balcioglu are suggesting a number of things and their 'cenotaphs' have acquired a broader meaning than that of the original, and the notion of the memorial is expanded. The Whitehall Cenotaph's original meaning and purpose as being a temporary memorial to the Great War has also changed as it is a memorial to all subsequent and future wars involving the United Kingdom.

At Dean Clough the cenotaph becomes a memorial for all those who used to be employed in the industry. It can be said that the empty Jura Mill is in itself a cenotaph, an empty tomb. For this reason, Brisley and Balcioglu put a 6 foot high photograph of the buildings 300 foot high chimney in the main hall.

The media accompanying the model cenotaphs is different at each location. In Gateshead, a sound-piece was played continuously alongside the model cenotaph which resembled the sound of muted gunfire. By being alien to the normal ambient noises of a Gateshead flat a feeling of isolation was suggested. This sound related to the theme of war and its muted quality suggested a distance between everyday urban life and the abnormal and traumatic experiences of a nation in conflict. The sentence 'The Future Dead' was inscribed on the wall, which projected the role of the cenotaph into the future. Acting as an omen, the words implied that in the event of a third world war, permanent monuments will have no place at all.

In a room at Dean Clough in Halifax, four grey screens had been erected which were head height and had photographs and text pinned to them. In contrast to the grey daubed windows in the adjacent room, the light streamed through the large grid framed windows, illuminating the photographs and the bold typed texts. The photographs of Dean Clough's former full employment as a carpet factory, were in black and white and showed many people operating looms and heavy machinery. Many were wearing grease or oil stained aprons and their rolled up sleeves revealed unprotected hands. Next to these images were photographs of British infantrymen during the Great War who were depicted standing in trenches, the mud enveloping their boots and 'putties'.

These still, documentary images were accompanied by the following texts: 'Trench Warfare; an introduction', 'Extracts from the Diary of J. E. Carr', 'House of Commons Select Committee on the Woollen Industry', 'The Factory System and the Domestic System' from Parliamentary Papers 1806, 'Machinery and Large-Scale Industry' from Marx's 'Capital', 'Daniel Defoe from 'A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain 1724 1726' and 'Peace Day 1919' from the diaries of Virginia Woolf.

The juxtaposition of these texts if seen as a whole constitutes a critique of our present economic, social and military systems. The Daniel Defoe extract suggests the contrast between a now empty industrial warehouse and a once prosperous and thriving community and goes on to present the working conditions at that time:

"if we knocked at the door of any of the mester manufacturers, we presently saw a house full of lusty

fellows, some at the dye-fat, some dressing the cloths, some at the loom. Some one thing, some another, all hard at work, and full employed upon the manufacture and ell seeming to have sufficient business".

This was the situation in the Halifax area around 1724-26, but it is not projected as an ideal way of living. The introduction of an extract from 'Capital' by Karl Marx shows the dangers of progressive technology in industry:

"The principle carried out in the factory system, of analysing the process of production into its constituent phases, and of solving the problems thus proposed by the application of mechanics, of industry, end of the whole range of the natural sciences, becomes the determining principle everywhere. Hence the machinery squeezes itself into the manufacturing industries; first for one thing, then for another".

The project quotes Marx to show the transition from the labourer within domestic manufacturing to that of workers as a class and an allied force;

"Thus the solid crystal of their organisation, based on the old division of labour, becomes dissolved and makes way for constant changes . . . That old fashioned industry has now been converted into an outside department of the factory, the manufacturing workman and the handicraftsman, whom it concentrates in large masses at one spot, and directly commands, capital also sets in motion by means of invisible threads, another army, that of the workers in the domestic industries, who dwell in large towns and are also scattered over the face of the country".

If there is an analogy between the armed soldier and the work force as another kind of army, the project is suggesting that the worker has no choice but to work in the industry common to his/her area and family. With one's life's work being determined by social circumstances, many people during a time of national conflict join the forces as a means of escape. This however, is an escape from a situation of no choice to another. This lack of choice is one reason why soldiers and workers are portrayed as being stoical through the media. No doubt bravery exists but it may well be that it is due to a situation of no choice rather than as acts of patriotism.

In another quotation that appeared at Kettlesyard Gallery, Cambridge, and then in Halifax, the project attempted to show this notion by using an extract from the diaries of Virginia Woolf. In July 1919 she was present at the Peace Day Celebrations when the Whitehall Cenotaph was unveiled.

She refers to the people as servants and goes on to say:

"They stood on Vauxhall Bridge and saw everything, generals and tanks and nurses and bands for two hours passing . . . But I don't know - It seems to me as a servants festival, something got up to pacify and placate 'the people' and now the rain's spoiling it . . . There's something calculated and politic and insincere about this peace rejoicing".

PART 2

Rather than limit the project to one specialized area of practice, Brisley and Balcioglu have used a battery of different media so that they can stimulate a broad range of reactions. The viewer is not limited to witnessing only a performance, a photograph, or an installation. An integration of different media is thought to be suitable to the issues inherent in the project.

The project has attempted to integrate archive material collected from its various locations with an art practice in order to confront the spectators' experience and conceptions of the roles of history and art in society. At the same time the project's choice of materials subsequently questions these cultural practices and suggests that they are used to maintain a right-wing status-quo.

This documentary approach has historical links with photomontage, photo-journalism and the Worker Photographer Movement which manifested itself in different countries in the 1920's and 1930's. The Worker Photography Movement consisted of groups of 'lay people' who gathered together to photograph and document their everyday surroundings and lifestyle.

"its emphasis, particularly in Germany and America, on the procession skills through their workshops, independent of formal institutions of education, is as revolutionary as was the conscious recognition of the separate character and value of working class culture." Su

'Braden "Committing Photography"', extract from Creative Camera no. 197/198, 1981.

This approach is similar to that of the project's in that they too are making work outside of the art institution and which relates directly to social issues. They are then proposing to take the work back into major institutions as a means of subverting and de-centralising the tradition of a dealer-commodity based art.

As well as many British artists working in a social-political context in the 1970's such as **Stephen Willats, Leeson, Dunn, Conrad Atkinson, Terry Atkinson and Victor Burgin**, one younger artist whose work has a direct relationship with that of **"The Cenotaph Project"** is **Alison Marchant**. Marchant combines media ranging from text, archive photographs, photo-silkscreen projection and objects within gallery and site-specific scenarios in order to discuss social-political issues from the past and present. (2)

In a recent exhibition at Rochdale Art Gallery (16th January - 5th March 1988) entitled "The Medium and the Message (Five Women Printmakers)", Marchant presented an installation alongside work by Chila Kumari Burman, Trisha Ferguson, Julieta Rugg.

In a piece entitled "Walloper History". Marchant's installation consisted **"of two large prints showing the domestic condition of (women) match-workers. These images are photo-silkscreens printed upon adjoining pages of a traditional English history book ('A Shorter History of England' and 'The New Imperialism')."**

The Match Women's Strike happened almost a hundred years ago, and little is known of the women who took part in it. The Strike Fund Register came to light ninety years after the event, and so it is only

fairly recently that the names of the strikers have been revealed".

"The Medium and the Message", exhibition catalogue, Rochdale Art Gallery 1988.

Projected onto two large screens were the names of the women involved in the strike. On an adjoining wall were copies of the original photographs that had been tinted by Marchant. These were displayed alongside a role of photocopied wallpaper similar to that shown in the original photograph. Attached to the paper was a postcard size image of women match-workers. Beside these, were two larger images of women's arms and hands showing the effects of sulphur burns. On the floor, a pile of matches lay below an empty Bryant and May matchbox with the year 1888 letrasetted onto it.

On the same wall, text explained the conditions, health hazards and low pay of the Bryant and May employees one hundred years ago. The history went on to explain the role of **Annie Besant** who "became a mediator for the strikers", set up a strike fund and organised marches.

The piece can be compared with 'The Cenotaph Project' in its description of the strikers reaction to a statue of the then Prime Minister, Gladstone (3). Both the project at Dean Clough, and Alison Marchant's 'Wallpaper History' attempt to deal with aspects of Victorian architecture, and public sculpture. They both suggest that these media were used by the Victorian ruling class to impose an imperial authority on the nation. We only have to look at the facades of many Victorian civic buildings to recognise their monumental scale, intended to overshadow the surrounding area. The issue is that public sculpture has always had this function in all eras and countries.

PART 3

At Kettlesyde Gallery, Brisley gave a seminar where he attempted to introduce 'The Cenotaph Project' both in relation to his own recent work and its place in society past and present. Cambridge had been (in 1914) a centre of pacifist opinion. Brisley linked this with the large Quaker community



of Cambridge. (Quakers believing in a non-violent role in society, this being an intrinsic element of their religion). He compared the fortunes of pacifists in Cambridge with those of Gateshead. It seems that many conscientious objectors in Cambridge were not punished for their stance, on the grounds that their beliefs had religious basis and because of their positions in Quaker society. However, Gateshead held tribunals whereby pacifists were forced to comply with enlistment or else be punished. Cambridge is predominantly middle class (due to it being a national educational centre). In contrast Gateshead has always been a working class area, it being a closely-knit shipbuilding community on the Tyne. The question that arises is that of class and of privilege. The Gateshead tribunals and the attitude taken towards pacifists suggests that there was a belief that the working class had no right to a political conscience. Discussion as a means of socialising art is one that Brisley began using in the mid 1970's. His arduous performance actions became less frequent and a change of media seemed to occur in a piece entitled 'The Peterlee Reports', a project Brisley involved himself with whilst Artist in Residence in Peterlee arranged through the Artists Placement Group (A.P.G.). (4) Peterlee is a new town housing estate in the Durham coalfields in the North East of Britain. As a mining industry was being wound down, many ex-miners and their families were re-housed in this new estate. The estate was something of an architectural experiment and as it proved, disaster. Peterlee was designed by Victor Passmore in the late 1960's. However because of inadequate construction procedures there was much discontent. Instead of producing 'performances' in this placement, Brisley concentrated on collecting a body of work based on aural history.

Using audio tape and photographs, he contributed documentary images and tape conversations to the newly founded local history archive based at Easington Village near Peterlee (known now as 'People's Past and Present'). This work was the fruit of extensive discussion with the local inhabitants of Peterlee. The project was to be in three stages. The final stage would be to examine the history of the relationship between the Peterlee community and the institutions of local government which had brought about the setting up of the new town. The project was not allowed to proceed beyond its initial documentation. 'The Cenotaph Project' includes discussion with spectators so that 'aural' material about the Whitehall Cenotaph, public monuments, the project's own form and the externalising of experiences of war, for instance, are part of it. There is a direct link between the A.P.G. project and what 'The Cenotaph Project' are attempting to do. All the features of 'The Cenotaph Project' were present in the A.P.G. in 1966: collaboration, a social awareness, a move away from the saleable 'art object' and a wish to penetrate society from within as a means of enacting social change.

"The local government became increasingly obstructive as it became clear that its own motives and actions would, if not questioned then at least be scrutinized".
Stuart Brisley, 'The Georgianna Collection' catalogue 1986.

Discussion within the project is a vital element as it attempts to speed up the process of deciphering meaning and allows 'real' discourse to take place between the spectator and 'creator'. Direct discussion

between artist and viewer attempts to 'defuse' the traditional view of the artist. If the artist's role in society is not seen as being elitist, the general view of artists being 'specially' gifted or talented comes into question.

- 1 The project was initiated by Stuart Brisley whilst Artist in Residence at the Imperial War Museum from January 1987 — July 1987 and commissioned by Projects U.K. As Brennan points out in his original thesis, Brisley acts as spokesperson and Balcioglu acts as a researcher and also conducts some of the seminars/workshops. Iain Robertson, a collaborator with Brisley on several past occasions, is responsible for the making/construction of the cenotaphs, though is not strictly speaking a collaborator on the Cenotaph Project's critical outline and placements.
- 2 Marchant also works collaboratively, anonymously and in group projects, such as the 'Discarded Sculptures/Order Out of Chaos' group/project, the Heritage Series, and in Artists for the Environment in Rochdale, covered elsewhere in this issue of Variant.
- 3 See following excerpts from Marchant's notes on 'Wallpaper History: an installation from the Heritage Series', in this issue of Variant.
- 4 Artists Placement Group was formed/launched in 1966 by Barbara and John Latham, Jeffrey Shaw and Barry Flanagan, the former two remaining its theoretical protagonists to this day. These founder members were soon joined by the artists David Hall and Stuart Brisley and they said that the function of A.P.G. is to act as a mediating mechanism between artists and organisations. Its aim is to place artists within organisations — industries, business, universities, government departments, development corporations, hospital boards, new towns — not primarily to produce art objects, but act as catalysts for cultural changes. John A. Walker 'Glossary of Art, Artists and Architecture since 1945', see also John A. Walker's extensive article in Studio International 1976. This article also includes reports to a questionnaire put by Walker to several of the A.P.G. artists.





'Wallpaper History' - Manchester Rd., Rochdale.

'Wallpaper History' - Berwick St., Rochdale.



Inside the frame of the photograph, lining the walls of her room, the imperial rose blooms in the background.

WALLPAPER HISTORY an installation from the 'Heritage' Series by Alison Marchant.

AN ANALOGY was made in the previous article between 'The Cenotaph Project' and Alison Marchant's installation work 'Wallpaper History' since both utilised a documentary approach within a contemporary art practice to raise questions about aspects of history relating to the socio-political class construction of people's lives. Marchant's ongoing Heritage Series (of which 'Wallpaper History' is a part) draws upon events connected with her family history. "In constructing these installations a past is identified and reclaimed" she states, and the work is arrived at through "a process of critical research". The following are excerpts from notes on the background to the Match Women's strike of 1888 which informs 'Wallpaper History' and versions of that work which have been placed in outside locations.

One can only speculate to the exact history of these pictures; it is possible that they were taken to aid the Match Workers campaign and some of these domestic pictures, are included in the book "Women photographers" by Val Williams.

Individuals depicted
Photographer/s
Exact Locations
Exact Dates

Unknown
Unknown
Unknown
Unknown

The uprising of the match workers began on the day of unveiling a statue of Gladstone in the factory forecourt (the workers wages were docked to pay for it). Some of the women went to the ceremony armed with bricks and stones, and after the unveiling they mobbed the statue. Shouting, screaming, yelling they clung to it, beat it, twined their arms around it and cut themselves so that their blood dripped upon the stoney plinth.

Annie Besant was a writer, her article on the match industry entitled "White Slavery in London" was published in link on 23rd June 1888. Besant would meet the Match Women on Mile End Waste where they would express their grievances. She became a mediator for the strikers who could hardly read or write, publicising their dissatisfaction. Besant set up a strike fund,

'organised' 56 of the 1400 women to march to the House of Commons on 11th July, and also persuaded them to form a strike committee. Alice France, Kate Slater, Mary Driscoll, Jane Wakeling and Eliza Martin were those 'taught to handle their own cause'. Their conditions were improved and when they went back to work a union was formed. It was written that their struggle with their employers marked a turning point in history with the emergence of 'New Unionism' and that it was women who were the first to raise the banner of 'New Unionism' so challenging the Victorian image of womanhood.

"Slumming" became a trend in the 1880's for the 'middle' and 'upper' classes who regarded their visits to the East End as one of their 'Social duties'. Patronising attitudes such as these continue today in their provision of solace for guilt-feelings that replace any real conviction or experience of hardship.

Two years before the Match Women's strike Missions and Settlements began to flourish around the East End: the Church of England under the growing influence of Christian Socialism increasingly involved itself with the parish poor; whilst 'middle class' labour organisers among the various 'socialist organisations' took it upon themselves to assist in the creation of trade unions for the unorganised working poor. Annie Besant came from a Christian background and around this time became a founder member of the Fabian Society, an organisation that propagated reformist-socialist ideas.

Writers such as Galsworthy and Dickens were two of the many writers who viewed the poverty of the match women. One match woman was described by Galsworthy as a 'lonely woman who made match boxes for fifteen hours a day in her room which was to her a prison cell... the woman rarely earned more than five shillings a week and that by the most painful drudgery'.

Dickens describes the conditions of a match woman in Bromley... 'She rented one room where she lived with her son and daughter, the daughter worked with her mother at making matchboxes. Having been asked to the disease from which her husband recently died the widow replies 'same as I'm doing'... starvation' as the interview continued the woman's replies, in spite of her obvious poverty, reflected a sense of pride and a refusal to succumb to the overwhelming burdens of her life. She also commented on those who 'fuss' and 'quarrel' over the poor as though they were mere artifacts to be dealt with as their 'betters' saw fit.

The words of the match woman are as poignant as the descriptions given by Dickens and Galsworthy, but her history is misplaced and her language is misrepresented, so that her words take second place, despite her direct experience of the situation. During the Match Women's Strike Annie Besant 'taught' a small group of women-workers to handle their own cause - this could have been a positive step, although this education only lasted a short time. But still, what of the women who were

'taught to handle their own cause?' How did they deal with their circumstances and responsibility? Apart from the mentioning of their names, yet again they have become invisible workers. They must have acquired a means of expressing their grievances publicly and coupling this with their first hand experience of working conditions within the factory they should have gained a radical strength that was denied them by the presence of 'middle class' mediators. Could they have continued Besant's education?

The Match Women's Strike was described as a success by Labourist History simply because factory regulations were introduced to prevent further contamination of the workers, as well as, the suspension of certain rules that lead to cuts in wages. A small advance in pay was gained, but the money was forwarded more in recognition of New Unionism operating within the factory. This unionism did not take into account the large number of homeworkers who were employed in the industry and continued to work under terrible conditions. These conditions continued in the Match Industry until as late as 1904 when the Daily Chronicle reported "in the dark crowded rooms of small highly rented houses women and children would work from daylight to dark to make the meanest pittance". This reiterates doubts over 'ground gained' through the strike situation; but have strikes ever won more than just concessionary measures? Have unions ever thoroughly investigated the relations inherent in 'Labour'?

AFTER

ARTISTS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT IN ROCHDALE

A.F.T.E.R. was formed early in 1987. Instigated by Paul Haywood, Karen Lyons, Paul McLaren and Emrys Morgan in connection with 'Order out of Chaos'. They are a group of artists working in the Borough of Rochdale who are finding new strategies for presenting environmental works. They have instigated and administered various projects mostly siting works in outside locations, in open spaces and across wasteland areas; working without funding and often using found materials.

'Television Image' (1987) was situated at the junction of a busy crossroads in Rochdale, composed of 64 injection moulded television frames and plaster cast toy suns suspended within. The tops of four boxes with text printed in English and Russian simply read packing instructions: 'DO NOT TURN OVER' - 'WITH CARE', printed in red and blue they correspond with the colours of the guns, which when viewed from the back revealed the crumpled plaster, unpainted surface showing how the material was pressed into its mould. While sunlight cast shadows onto the translucent fabric of an outline of a

falling figure confined within the structure of the system of left/right, red/blue restricted frameworks.

Several days later the work was vandalised. The falling figure was ripped down only to reveal the screen of red and blue suns. The site was covered with Peace through NATO stickers, an act which changed the meaning of the work and so led to its dismantling. Outside sitings of this nature are obviously open to this kind of violation which shows that existence of site specific works is crucial, while documentation is imperative. Each siting is seen as a continual representation of collective thought.

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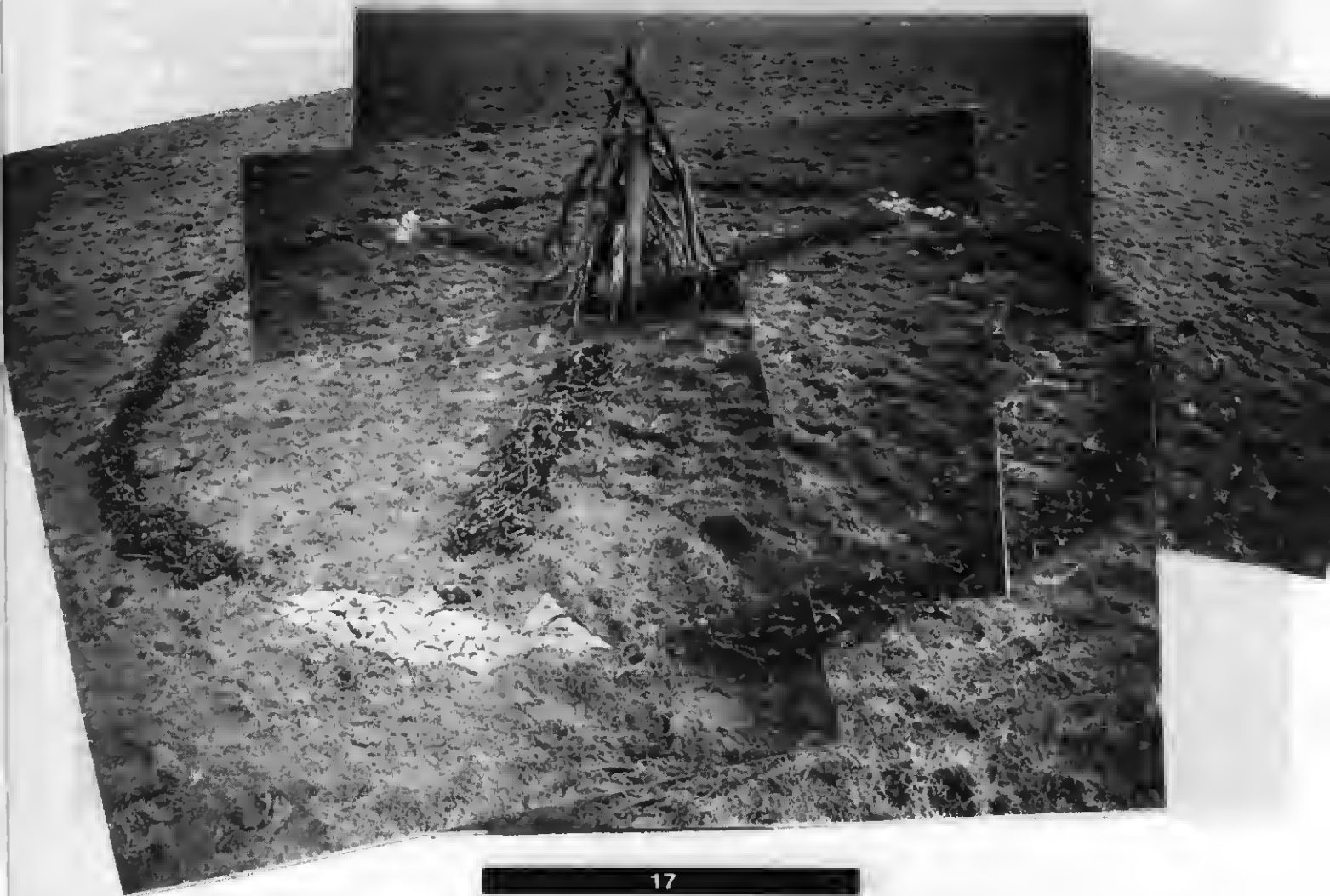
'Television Image' (1987).



DISCARDED SCULPTURES ORDER OUT OF C H A O S

ORDER OUT OF CHAOS/DISCARDED SCULPTURES (Objects around Britain): A scheduled event which took place on December 1st 1987. Contributors presented site-specific works (Sculpture, Painting, Photography, Performance) in their own locality. The intention was to place the art object in incidental environments where it may be discovered accidentally, rather than sought or advertised. Contributors were asked to give no indication, in the presentation of the work, of 'art value', title, origin or otherwise. The intention was simply to create throughout Britain a series of happenings. The following views were written by two of the participants, Howard Slater and Paul Haywood, and available documentation is reproduced.

Simon Fenhoulet, Cardiff.



HOWARD SLATER

If the museum stands for ordering and classification, for the rupture of movement and of dialogue; if the gallery is in sinister collusion with the art market, then any move away from these institutions implies a criticism of the physical and ideological parameters they impose.

The work contributed to the 'Discarded Sculptures' project turned its attention to the environment and made simultaneous interventions around the country in the set time span of an eight hour day. A series of disparate events homogenised around the idea that though working independently actions became part of a greater activity shared by others. As part of the on-going process it became relevant that the end result was not seeking qualitative discrimination, or censorship, nor the amassing of uniform quantities but the realization that ideas, notions and processes take preference over a regard for materialism and art as commodity.

Some of the work offered was of a transient and ephemeral nature whilst others showed evidence of quite deliberate production implanted upon the environment. Several of the rural sitings merged with the surroundings, not acting as distinct, and showed properties, that over the course of time would lead to their being assimilated by natural processes. The urban sitings could be said to proffer a challenge to events in the neighbourhood as well as referring to social issues. Overall there were instances of engagement connected to the work; inquisitive, prohibitive... as well as invisibility where the observer came across the work by accident.

Perhaps a core issue with the project is that by placing a sculpture within the environment the sculpture is desanctified, it becomes vulnerable and opens itself up to violation; it is not private and protected but public, and less precious, value is subordinated in the ascendance of communication, an aspect of the work that arises from its opposition to the completed, fulfilled, exclusive nature of institutionalised display. Of course this is not to lay claims that this type of project is 'radical' because the parameters of the gallery and the museum do not exist solely within these institutions but are products of more all enveloping social-relations, and this is a question for individual artists to ask themselves. 'Discarded Sculptures' does, however, posit a link between cultural practice and wider political issues in its inherent questioning of a monopolized self-expression and by its anonymity that undermines notions of ownership.

'Order out of Chaos' was instigated in 1984. Its initial conception was a response to the present state of art in education. The project has evolved as coincidental dialogue, the content of which is an experiment of art as praxis.

We would be interested in hearing from others who wish to place their names and addresses on our mailing list for details of future projects.

Correspondence should be addressed to:

Order out of Chaos

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151 Claderbrook Road
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Lancashire
(For Future Projects & Mailing List)

Discarded Sculptures

Howard Slater
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Leyton

London E11 4EH

(For list of sitings)

We regret that we are unable to reply to correspondence which is not covered with adequate return postage, as these projects are artist instigated and have not been funded.



Howard Slater/Alison Marchant, Jeffrey Hill, near Preston.

PAUL HAYWOOD

This project was artist initiated and administered from beginning to end and as such was quite ambitious. Although when compared with official art events in this country, **Discarded Sculptures** was financially very inexpensive, it still stretched the individual pocket. Each artist has spent on time, material expenses, postage and photographic documentation. The administration has been relatively expensive in terms of postage, leaflet production, collation of material and in the future the production of a suitable record. Now what remains to be done, is to make a success of this recording and achieve some returns for the artists involved. The idea is so simple, but in reality it's so difficult in view of the high resistance shown to the group so far.

'Order out of Chaos' imply a number of principals by their actions, a number of premises for artistic production. But the intention is to organise a structure, potentially secure, for activities which already exist to combine their strengths, and not to impose a form of cultural imperialism. We aim to provide an outlet, facilitating artists' initiated projects. The idea behind '**Discarded Sculptures**' is nothing new, in our case, we are looking for collaboration as a means of collective efficiency in pursuit of various common goals and the elusive cash payment.

That people are profoundly offended by this, or just bloody minded about it, defines the divided nature of our society and more specifically our own artistic endeavours. Criticism has been levelled at the small mindedness of our organisation and its petty pretence at the 'big league', at the same time we have been accused of 'threatening everything so far achieved' (Arts Council). Since we have never purported to threaten anyone, God forbid the 'big league', it is remarkable how insecure artists and administrators feel in their activity in this country. We are not in the habit of outlining correct modes of existence or artistic production and rather than feeling angered by the comments made to us, we see a solution, that in consolidating artists activities, security is more feasible. This is not to say that the breadth of involvement of artists should be narrowed but that such as the **National Artists Association** offers a structure that can achieve many things had it the mass support it so richly deserves.

What happened on 1st December in the '**Discarded Sculptures**' in respect of all this, was outstanding in its breadth and reassuring in that such a project can embrace such diversity.

There were those who would have preferred more of an issue base, those who have worked more exclusively on an aesthetic. Each artist initiated and obviously executed their own contribution. The collaborative aspect was a conceptual one; 50 plus artists throughout Britain embarking on the same project and dealing with its form in their own way, on their own ground. As a consequence there is a broad issue contested. This is that bureaucracy

has been bypassed and as such, artists have taken on complete responsibility for the way in which their work is shown and projected at an audience. Without the label of 'art' the spectator has been free to address these works in whatever way; there have been some odd responses but genuine. The dialogue achieved is now contributory to the whole multi-various face of art. In this case, the onlookers approach has not necessarily been coloured by any predetermined notions of art, but more what the reality of an object and its environment is; a common and natural consideration. If the work has inspired anger as a reaction, it has not come from the audience, the 'rabid rate payer', but from the arts administrators who 'don't understand' the motive. Be warned, these things remain a threat while they remain on the periphery. However much the participants may have worried about the effective consumption of their work by an audience it appears that the problem now is, does one make it digestible for the art establishment and thereby forget the public. Moreover why can't this type of thing exist in parallel with the gallery etc, as simply another area of activity? The 'art establishment' has never been a source of bitterness for us and indeed we are all part of it as artists. Maybe though, we now see an official and an unofficial side.

Siting

There is obviously concern over the wholesale dumping of 'rubbish' in public spaces, left for others to clean-up. The problem of how a work is sited and whether it is advisable to seek permission first is something that each has had to weigh up for themselves. Even without that permission it can be seen that some sites are easier than others.

This has been one of the two most debated features of the project and certainly of interest. One siting was given, respectfully, to a graveyard marking the vintage grave of a woman and presumably, her child. The piece served as a small memorial and had the grace and poetry of most of the other symbols of emotional expression placed in the same area. It was acceptable, possibly because it is acceptable to do this sort of thing in this particular environment.

However, it could be said that this was more obviously a creative gesture than certain of the other **'Discarded Sculptures'**. It is perhaps to do with whether that attribute is immediately recognisable. The larger and more outwardly sophisticated sculptures seemingly received more respect. But the initial motivation for the project was that which is incidental and so recording a response is that more difficult and maybe not even necessary.

Here lies a clue to the second area of debate, how well a work projects the public image of art. For the most part though, there was no indication as to an art value and so if a sculpture appears as a wreath at a grave, that is precisely what it is and the connection between art and day to day existence is complete. The esoteric arguments become obsolete, a piece of rubbish is a piece of rubbish, even if it has meaning and even if that meaning is directed. Also, having ones efforts destroyed in such a context seems wholly reasonable. In a number of instances, discarded images and small sculptures were taken from their sites within the space of an hour and not by



Nato Welton, Wood Green, London.



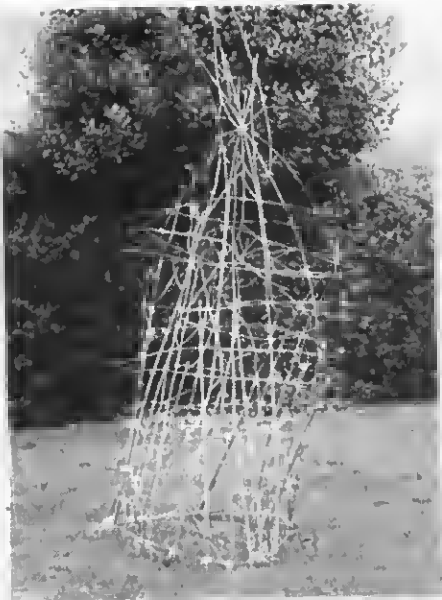
Slater/Marchant, Jeffrey Hill, near Preston.



Rodger Brown, near Winsworth, Derbyshire.

Sally Houston, Church Rd., Belfast.





Rosalind Pounder, Matlock, Derbyshire.



Paul Raftery, Brixton, London.



Emrys Morgan, Millnrow Rad., Rochdale.



Karen Lyons, Lancaster.

refuse collectors. Perhaps what worries the doubters/administrators is the lack of monetary worth, material value. However, that's the reality of our situation and certainly quality has not been dispensed with.

Support

There are many arguments why the Arts Council should or should not have funding in this country. I believe them to be very poor and deserving of much more cash. At present they cannot function according to their own brief and cannot embrace the full spectrum of artistic activity which exists nationally. But, when we are told by certain bureaucrats at the Arts Council 'you are threatening everything we have achieved so far' in the field of publicly sited work, the answer has got to be, what exactly is that? What was being referred to was the unofficial nature of the work that would stand as bad P.R. in the face of the all important private sponsorship deals. **'Discarded Sculptures'** is nothing new, but represents a small portion of an activity that is being embarked upon constantly by practising artists. These people are concerned about how it is that their work reaches an audience and who has the ultimate control over that. They are working all the time, apparently without the Arts Council's awareness and with only nominal confidence, as symbolised by financial backing, being placed in them.

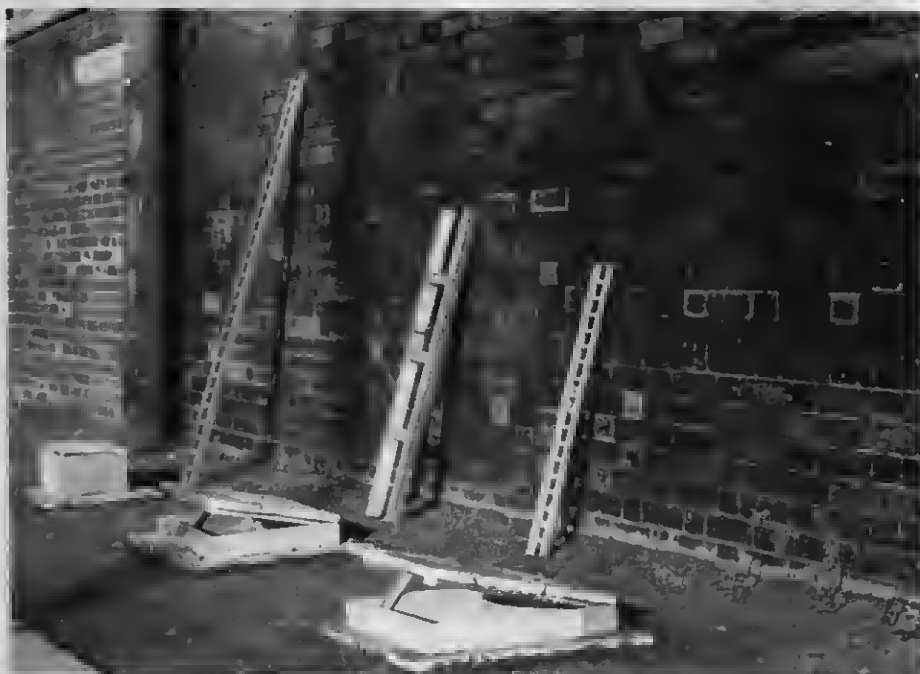
All this can be attributed to lack of funding from government source, and so we can feel sympathy. At a time when government is apparently encouraging initiative and entrepreneurialism, that purported belief in the individual has a reactionary effect. Rather than the wholesale free(dom) for all implied by current philosophies, unofficial trends and activities are occurring. One is not so much suppressed, more completely ignored. One answer, we feel, is a unification or collaboration of activities, initiated by artists, that can take up their social role by more effectively consulting both audience and practitioner through the sharing of ideas and experience.

The fact is, jobs for artists don't, for the large part, exist in this country and so we make our own, and they pay very little, and they are mostly unorthodox. So until the cash starts flowing, this is our hobby. Then to be told by government and institutional representatives that this is out of order, **chaos must ensue.**

'Order out of Chaos'.



above: Brian Connolly, Lombard St., Belfast.
 above right: Louise Crawford, Niddrie St., Edinburgh.
 centre: Paul McLaren, Rochdale.
 below right: Iain Robertson, Miffers Yard, London.
 below: Peter Hatton, Trentham St., Manchester.



'Discarded Sculptures' 1987

Locations & Descriptions

Labels printed 'P.L.C. God' were sited on the branches of trees outside building societies in Rochdale.

By **Paul McLaren**.

A flowery cut out resembling a T-shirt is juxtaposed upon a hoarding - a machismo whisky advert graffitied 'Joeve'. Wood Green shopping area, London.

By **Nato Welton**.

Brigitte Nowers observed as her daughter Ida, then aged 8 months, makes her first drawing across the condensation on a window in their Portsmouth home.

At night **Emrys Morgan** turned all the rooms of his home into a light box using different light sources and projections, transforming the everyday props into a series of curious installations and performances.

97 Milnrow Road, Rochdale.

A series of ladder sculptures of different heights and widths leant against a very high wall in Trentham Street, Manchester. By the spacing of the treads it appears as though it would be impossible to climb these ladders, and the wall is so high one would never reach the top or the other side.

By **Peter Hatton**.

Alan Rankle constructed a work from materials found on St Leonards Beach, East Sussex. A poetic assimilation of landscape, rustling in the breeze. Eventually the piece was washed out to sea by high tide.

In an open-cast clay mine, South Yorkshire, broken clayware pipes, a series of fragmented pieces, were placed on the ground in the regimented form of a grid.

By **Stephen Melton**.

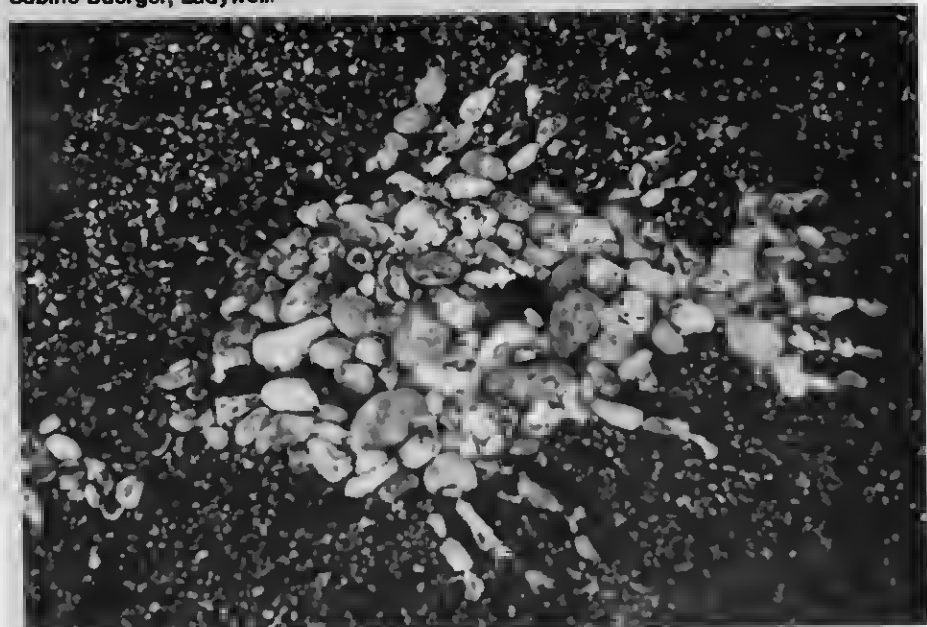
Two relating works, created separately in different parts of the country by two different people, contain ecological concerns. **Richard Crabbe** made the shape of a fish from pebbles found at the water's edge of Southsea Beach, Portsmouth. Describing it as 'Beached White Fish', we know that it is a dead object, and like Sally Houston's Discarded Sculpture (described earlier) we immediately think of polluted waters. **Simon Fenhoulet's** work



Stephen Melton, Yorkshire.



Sabine Buerger, Ladywell.



Richard Crabbe, Portsmouth.

is based around the shape of a large peace symbol, also constructed from found materials. Broken pieces of plastic are arranged into the basic shapes of a bird, a fish, and an animal at the three points along the circumference. Simon's work is sited in Cardiff, Wales.

52.56 North 01.06 West - the crossroads of Forest Fields, Nottingham, at this place **Jeremy Noond** created a "commemorative obelisk for the fallen". The location, once the site of a gibbet, is where he hung his sculpture of nine calico slings lined with khaki padding, suspended from nine metal rods tied with thick black rope and electrical cable.

Sally Houston sited a roughly cut table with ceramic crockery by the water's edge of a river which passed a sewage outlet where salmon and trout once bred. Sally collected the opaque water in the vessels and place them on the table as an invitation for by-passers to stop and drink the pollution they had helped to create.

Neer Church Road, Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Paul Raftery placed a photogram of a knife upon a flag stone, the site where many muggings and stabbings have taken place, one of the many tragedies of the urban environment.

Tulse Hill Estate, Brixton, London.

A standing stone near Wirksworth in Derbyshire was the site for an arc of fire by **Roger Brown**. A work which was a monument to time, an ancient standing stone combined with fire; the initial making of fire being one of the first acts of civilisation. The movement of the arc resembles the motions of a pendulum.

A painted carpet was situated in the window of a derelict building of a run-down street. The ironic caption reads 'Feels So Spiritual', commenting upon religious, escapist, misconceptual portrayal of conditions of poverty.

By **Louise Crawford**.

Niddry Street, Edinburgh.

Rosalind Pounder built a cage-like sculpture, which appeared to correspond with the scale of a human form. A structure of balance and tension, the making of which followed a repetitive cycle, upon its photograph she wrote the word 'Megalith'.

Matlock, Derbyshire.

A series of large drawings were produced by painting a layer of lime wash onto the outside windows of an empty shop premises. Once dry, the lime was rubbed and scraped away, revealing the dark interior. **Brian Collony** created this work without permission as the agents of the shop tried to charge him £20 per day. The lime wash was painted on at night and left to dry. The next day he created the drawing in full

public view. The lyrical images reflect energies and forces, evolving and transforming. Walls crumble and melt into waves, sounds, break into water.

22 Lombard Street, Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Sabine Buerger presented six works to Discarded Sculptures, most striking was her piece consisting of two papier mache mask-like heads which drifted with the current of a river, as if figures up to their necks in water. Her works symbolised the journey of a silenced history, where women are alienated by male-orientated language, Ravensbourne River, Ladywell.

Iain Robertson made a cap stand form a hammer and sickle. Presenting us with history's icon of class culture; a cloth cap view of working class political activity looking solely towards the labour of men. A dark shadow falls across a wall.

Location: Dis-located.

Alison Marchant and **Howard Slater** placed texts beneath stones and in gaps in the wall of a ruinedcroft. The text questioned documentation and revealed the problematic representation of the event itself. The pages fluttered in the wind and the rain, becoming ragged like strange pieces of soiled lace - the words faded. Some were removed from the wall by passers-by who read the message. Finally another wall fell down covering all last words, reducing the space once more to silence.

Jeffrey Hill, Longridge, near Preston.

List of participants (in no particular order).

PAUL McLAREN
NATO WELTON
BRIGITTE NOWERS
EMRYS MORGAN
PETER HATTON
SIMON FENHOULET
ALISON MARCHANT
HOWARD SLATER
JEZ NOOND
SALLY HOUSTON
NIGEL MULLAN
PAUL RAFTERY
ROGER BROWN
RAY WARD
LEE BURGESS
TREVOR BAILEY
LOUISE CRAWFORD
STEPHEN MELTON
BERNADETTE WRIGHT
DAWN RODGERS
JAMES BURT
RACHEL MANN
JASON TUCKER
PAUL BLOW
JANET MERCER

KAREN LYONS
RICHARD CRABBE
LORNA GREEN
ALAN RANKLE
BRIAN CONNOLLY
ROSALIND POUNDER
MIKE ROBSON
CHERYL KOPREK
MARTIN McSWEEN
ANDY CAIRNS
JILL ELLARD
VAL FISH
WILL CANNINGS
RACHEL AINSCOUGH
JEAN HOWELL
ANDREW HORNE
NEIL HARRISON
SARAH CARSON
TIM MOUNTFORD
DARREN BUTLER
TOBY HEYS
JOANNE BRADDOCK
MIKE DUNCULF
LINDA GARDNER
HELEN ROWLEY
ANDREW MOTORSHEAD
COLIN BAXTER
LOUISE WALSH
NICK STUBBS
VAL MURRAY
JOHN CLARK
PAUL HAYWOOD
KEITH BRIDGEWOOD
SABINE BUERGER
IAIN ROBERTSON



SCOTLAND....SCOTLAND....SCOTLAND....SCOTLAND....

THE FESTIVAL OF NON - PARTICIPATION

SCOTLAND....SCOTLAND....SCOTLAND....SCOTLAND....

The Festival of Non-Participation is a decentralised cultural festival being held in Scotland during 1988. The festival will provide an open situation in which various groups and individuals can organise events expressing their ideas about non-participation. The festival is not confined to the arts. Following are some topics within the subject of non-participation for you to consider as a potential organiser and non-participant. The originators of the festival hope that many diverse organisations throughout Scotland will stage events to take place under the umbrella of The Festival of Non-Participation. The originators do not want to act as legislators but will advise, encourage and provide support. The finance, advertising and organisation of each event remain the responsibility of that particular organiser. Any group or individual organising an event is asked to make it known that the event is part of The Festival of Non-Participation and is asked to contact the co-ordinator to register their event so that a programme of The Festival of Non-Participation can be kept up to date. Co-ordinator: Peter Horobin, The Data Attic, 37 Union Street, Dundee DD1 4BS or Tel. 0382 27735 during normal working hours.

NON-PARTICIPATION = UNEMPLOYMENT

When a person is unemployed she/he is kept by the state on a very low subsistence income which prevents her/him from participating in Mrs Thatcher's concept of popular capitalism. That person, therefore, is a non-participant whether she/he wishes to be or not. Unemployment can be a valuable opportunity to capitalise on one's free time and although one is in effect a non-participant within the consumerist society one should not be made to feel guilty or inadequate for being so.

NON-PARTICIPATION = NON-CONSUMERISM

The love of spending money has become a drug on which the majority of people in western society have become hooked. During the 80s society has become overly conscious of finance and materialism. Popular capitalism has egged the population of G.B. to participate fully in this new dominant culture. Consumerism has become the new religion. In order to oppose this lust for personal wealth many individuals have decided to non-participate. By eating a diet free of manufactured foodstuffs or by simple living and choosing to cycle, walk or take buses, rather than owning a car, or refusing to watch T.V., many form their own alternative style of non-participation. By non-participating in some aspects of the consumerist society people do something positive about stemming the tide of pollution.

NON-PARTICIPATION = TOURISM

During the 80s society's leisure time has become a commodity. Tourism has established itself as the largest growth industry. Whereas, in the past, our leisure time was 'free' time it is now a marketable part of our consumerist society. Scotland, in particular, has become a tourist country. Many Scots cannot afford to participate in the tourist attractions of their own country. Our natural heritage has been divided into specialist areas: military zones, forestry plantations, industrial complexes, sporting estates, wildlife reserves and tourist areas. As a consequence, the Scot is no longer free to roam extensively within her/his country.

NON-PARTICIPATION = SUICIDE

The most drastic and final form of non-participation is suicide. Some have deliberately taken their own lives as a personal expression of protest. Being an emotive and taboo subject, suicide is rarely dis-

cussed, however, it remains a popular method of non-participation.

NON-PARTICIPATION = ART

Under the welfare state system of support for the arts, via the administration of the Arts Council, art has been made accessible to the working classes. Every citizen has a share in the art produced in this country. New policies of privatisation and sponsorship by industry, which have been given Arts Council support, will take art out of the public domain and place it firmly in the private sector. Where art has been free to everyone it will now have a charge and instead of being a public responsibility it will become that of the oligarchy. As a consequence, the citizens will have to pay to see the art of their own country. The practise of art will become the luxury of the well-off. Elitism in the arts will become rife. The artist, unfortunately, is a prostitute and has always sold her/his services to the highest bidder. By accepting Arts Council money the artist condones the actions of the state even when that state seeks to bring about her/his downfall. A few artists however choose to be non-participants by forming their own alternative way of working and self-support.

NON-PARTICIPATION = PROTEST

For generations non-participation has been the primary form of protest. Industrial strikes have a long history within capitalism. To strike is to non-participate in the policies of the industrialist. Mahatma Gandhi firmly believed in non-participation as a viable form of protest. In Scotland today many are talking about non-participation policies as a form of protest against the Tory poll tax. It could be argued that we, as a race, do not non-participate enough and that we are over-tolerant of our democratically elected government.

ART SUICIDE

Karen Eliot

'THE ALTERNATIVE GARDEN FESTIVAL' a statement about the elitism of the official Garden Festival. The alternative event will concern itself with the growing of vegetables on industrial wasteground somewhere in Glasgow. It is the aim of the organisers to produce an edible end result. Non-participation will be free.

'THE BURNING' is a statement about marketing issues within the artworld. Instead of being invited to submit works for exhibition and sale, artists will be invited to submit exclusively for destruction by fire. The works therefore, will not be shown or preserved thereby depriving the art market of potential assets and commodities. The event will take place in Glasgow on a suitable outside location.

'VAUDIO WEEKEND' The Dundee Resources Centre for the Unemployed (D.R.C.U.) has agreed to host a weekend of audio, video and super 8 during 22nd, 23rd and 24th July 1988. This event will be part of The Festival of Non-Participation, a decentralised festival celebrating alternative culture.

We, the organisers, are inviting anyone in Scotland working with audio, video and/or super 8 to submit works. Everything submitted will be used to make programmes during the weekend. There will be no submission fee but the organisers will keep the material unless otherwise requested.

The intention of the weekend is to show that there is a healthy, wide-ranging tradition in Scotland of making entertaining and interesting audio visual works outside of the mainstream commercial market.

For further information contact:

Pete Horobin
D.R.C.U.
2 Hilltown
Dundee
Tel. (0382) 27735.

To date the following events have been discussed although it is too early to confirm them.

'SUICIDE' during the first two weeks of September 1988 The Dundee Resources Centre for the Unemployed (D.R.C.U.) has agreed to host a large exhibition about suicide as part of The Festival of Non-Participation, a decentralised festival celebrating alternative culture. The exhibition will seek to explore the myths, taboos, history and statistics concerning this emotive subject.

To give the exhibition some dimension it will be organised in two parts both of which will run in tandem. The first part will be historical and statistical tracing the early recorded aspects of suicide and its development through civilisation to the 80s.

The second part of the exhibition is open to all creative persons living in Scotland to submit visuals on paper, audio cassettes, video and/or super 8 on the theme. All works submitted will be shown; there will be no jury or hanging fee and works will be kept by the organisers unless otherwise requested.

For further information contact:

Pete Horobin
D.R.C.U.
2 Hilltown
Dundee
Tel. (0382) 27735.

Deadline for submissions to D.R.C.U. is 18th August 1988.

In Bristol, on the 6th October 1987, a 39 year old artist killed herself. So what, you say. Suicide has been fashionable among the artistic community for as long as we can remember. Some very famous artists have killed themselves; Van Gogh, Arshite Gorky, Mark Rothko. Many of these suicides have been dramatic, some have been creative and a few have been tragic. Rachel Caine's death falls sadly into the latter category.

When an artist, as in Rachel's case, is in the position of being unable to support her/himself financially through the sale of her/his art she/he is forced to register as unemployed in order to qualify for supplementary benefit. In this country the majority of young artists are in this position. Although they are registered as unemployed they continue to work on their own creative output. Being thus unemployed while creating full-time, allows the artist to produce for exhibitions. Galleries, whether private or state run, provide the main retail outlet for art. If an artist declares that she/he is working creatively while claiming supplementary benefit the D.H.S.S. states that she/he is not eligible for full-time employment and consequently not entitled to supplementary benefit. If the artist declares that she/he is only interested in working part-time, eg 3 days per week, so that she/he can continue creative work during the other 4, the D.H.S.S. reminds her/him, in no uncertain fashion, that one must be seeking full-time employment to be eligible for supplementary benefit. If the artist fails to yield to the persuasive methods of the D.H.S.S. she/he has her/his benefit cut. The artist then, because she/he is not self-supportive, faces homelessness and starvation as well as not being able to afford to produce art. Many artists are facing this stark reality because the fascistic D.H.S.S. is coercing them off the dole in order to clean up the statistics thereby putting a veneer on the government's tarnished image. This government constantly proves that it prefers to use such heavyhanded tactics rather than provide viable alternatives. Such methods, over a period of years, by the D.H.S.S. made Rachel Caine put her head in front of a train. Margaret Thatcher's form of popular capital-

ism only operates successfully in a particular commercial world whereas art creates its own world with clearly defined marketing laws which have taken generations to cultivate. Once an artist is established it becomes easier for her/him to sell and therefore easier for her/him to attain financial independence.

In our less than art-conscious culture it could take years for an artist to break through. Statistics show that only 6% of artists in the U.K. live from their art alone. Ironically death, in general, provides the necessary push to bring the artist's work to the attention of the buying public. Death by suicide is definitely preferred by the romantic and fickle art buyers.

Earlier this year Mrs Thatcher declared publicly that she would eradicate socialism from the face of this country. It is well-known that under our post-war socialist welfare state, with public money going into the arts via The Arts Councils, art has become more accessible and therefore flourished. Instead of now putting a political will into the growth of the arts and the well-being of the artists the government has chosen to cut its support to the artist at the very root. Surely the artist should not have to sign-on to eke a subsistence existence from the state. Either the government should provide the artist with a weekly allowance that would give her/him sufficient money to live and create on or implement an initiative whereby thousands of residencies would be created. For example, every resources centre for the unemployed should have an artist in residence as well as schools, colleges, community centres, public art galleries, factories and leisure complexes. Both remedies would give the artist status in the community whereby she/he would have a recognised job instead of at present, being branded as unemployed and an undignified scrounger. Rachel Caine's death dramatically brought to our attention the fact that 4 of her art friends had also recently committed suicide as a result of the intransigence and remorseless callousness of the D.H.S.S. One is forced to ask the question: how many artists are taking their own lives as part of the unofficial suicide statistics in this country?

A FOOTNOTE TO THE FESTIVAL OF PLAGIARISM

The **Festival Of Plagiarism** took place in London, San Francisco and elsewhere during January and February 1988. This brief article deals only with the London phenomenon (details of the other manifestations being unavailable) and does so from an insider's point of view, the author having published and contributed to the booklet 'Plagiarism: art as commodity and strategies for its negation'; having been involved in the organising of some of the events of the **Festival**; and having attended virtually all of them. The extent of my engagement with the work may be taken as a measure of my subsequent disappointment with the results of the **Festival**: it very rapidly became apparent that this was a largely bungled intervention — an opportunity decisively missed. While individual exhibitions contained some interesting work, and while the entire venture was well-intended, little ground which might have provided a basis for coherent, intelligent and relevant radical-left cultural activity was gained. This I put down partly to personalities — differences of opinion, political infighting and/or lack of communication of one sort or another — and more especially to a general cultural condition. The former, while it tends to baffle immediate hopes, is to my mind a mere symptom of the latter; and it is with the latter that I am concerned here.

Much had been made of the possibilities for the 'infiltration of the media' before the **Festival**: indeed, this was expounded by the instigators as the central to the project. In the event, coverage to date has been limited to a handful of trivial articles of which only that by John Walker in 'The Times Higher Educational Supplement' (with which I deal below) betrayed even the slightest involvement or familiarity with any of the material on show. This is not the place to attempt to redress the balance, as it were, by rehearsing the list of exhibitions and events that were studiously and unsurprisingly ignored by the 'establishment', whose interests they served only accidentally, if at all. It is pointless, further, to mythologize or to lapse into an indulgent celebration of the **Festival's** inadequacies: rather, my intention is to try to analyse some of its multiple failures. In this way, it might be possible to be better prepared in the event of future activities. From a practical point of view, the **Festival** lasted too long and relied too much upon the efforts of the few to midwife the experience for the many: two months proved lengthy in the extreme, both from the point of view of pressure put upon those responsible for the smooth running of the events; and of general interest in the issues which the **Festival** attempted to address. Two or three weeks at most would seem the maximum length of time that public interest — let alone that of the participants — can be sustained. In retrospect, weekend events seem just as useful, even if they cannot be trumpeted as being of major importance and in fact, the quality of the work, and how apposite it is, counts in the long run for more

Ed Baxter



Baxter, Dickason, Hopton, 'Hoardings' installation detail, Bedford Hill Gallery.

than its quantity and extent. Almost inevitably, people were drawn to two or three events (taken as symptomatic of the entire **Festival**), usually those which were within easy reach of their home by public transport — convenience and comfort ultimately delimiting the extent of engagement with the work. Unfortunately, there was little interaction between one show and another, or between those involved in the various shows — nothing, in short, to counteract the widespread tendency to reduce cultural activity to a series of easily consumable gestures.

It was naive, arrogant perhaps, to presuppose on the part of the audience(s) an analytical familiarity with the concept of plagiarism and a knowledge of diverse expressive vocabularies: without some sort of guide, the work — despite the 'anyone welcome' umbrella under which it appeared — often seemed off-putting. Only in a few instances was there any attempt to provide information which might have opened up the work; while the 'Plagiarism' booklet

often seemed to represent an entirely separate phenomenon (even on the level of where and when exhibitions were being held — there being several last minute delays and changes that could surely have been avoided).

From the point of view of producing artefacts, I do not intend to suggest that the 'lowest common denominator' approach should be adopted — as it is by petit bourgeois artists pursuing their 'inalienable right' to patronise the proletariat. Far from trying to meet the expectations of a preconceived audience — which all too often takes the form of spoon-feeding designer politics to consumers holding liberal opinions, or bootlegging propaganda in the guise of 'popular culture' — radical work must adopt a more analytical approach towards both itself and its putative audience. Indeed, the whole question of what an audience is must be tackled. The **Festival of Plagiarism** relied to a great extent on an unstated

contradiction - that a 'radical' and 'politicised' body of semi-passive consumers existed. And it proved unable to define a new audience — one whose activity was comprehended as productive — because the producers themselves failed to understand their role in the socio-economic process which currently determines the shape of culture. Unfortunately, the suffocatingly patronising attitude widely prevalent at present was unwittingly reinforced by the 'open' nature of the Festival. Stewart Home has written that it appeared that he was interested in democratising art by encouraging open participation. More than this, the 'open' approach supposes - unconsciously - an infinite, easily -engaged audience: it sustains the myth of an essentially passive mass waiting to be 'inspired' or revitalised in some way by artifacts whose function is reliant upon their being easily consumed. The audience - the presupposed body of consumers, rather than the entities who physically turn up at exhibitions - is the metaphorical glue which binds artists and cultural workers together and enables them to define themselves as (typically, individualistic) creators. Clearly, this metaphor is a weak basis for our activities.

The concomitant of this mythical audience is the essentially passive creator waiting to be inspired by 'the muse', 'God', 'the cause' &c — by a higher authority. The paradigmatic artist, therefore, stands between two alibis; the force that will or will not be inspired. (The latter is akin to the 'essentially dead' matter which the 'creator' supposedly transforms — but which in fact is brought into being through a transformative process which suggests this 'essence': for this 'essence' does not exist in any real sense at all). This position is, evidently, one of impotence and irresponsibility. However, it is widespread: and it evidently 'works', keeping people in their place (as 'creators' or 'consumers').

Having dispensed with inspiration in the practice of Plagiarism, the Festival participants nevertheless maintained, albeit tacitly, the existence of the to-be-inspired audience. This concept, one might suppose ought to have received special attention during the **Festival of Plagiarism**. However, all the signs were that it was accepted without question. I do not deny, that one of the points of the work is to communicate in some manner; I simply deny the validity of the projected audience - in place of which I would posit the realisation of a set of social relations in which audience, artefact and creator are comprehended as mutually productive forces.

These is a genuine need, I think, not only for 'producers' to work together in some coherent fashion, but for 'consumers' to grasp their place in the scheme of things: for the consumption of art currently has a productive dimension, in that it tends to reproduce the conditions which sustain the commodity culture, though this instinctive reaction can be subverted and transformed, can produce something else. What is important, then, is **how** a commodity is consumed; not the fact that it is consumed.

While a loose network could be said to exist, there was little evidence from the Festival that would lead anyone to posit the

existence of an interpretative and/or productive community with common aims and activities. Given this absence, it proved very difficult to generate and maintain any sense of momentum. People were simply unwilling to "invest their time" in the work. This touches upon a crucial area, as I see it, of radical activity in an economically determined culture: how one deals with one's time — not from the casual view of 'what can I **choose** to do today', but in the context of a productivist society in which time is the yardstick of value. This is fundamentally problematic.

What people do **not** do with their time, generally, is 'spend' it on art shows and the like: for here there is little in the way of a reward, - no pay off -, nothing for one's investment (except for the few who play the commodity-art-market). Artistic activity falls largely under the heading of 'leisure'; and where the work proves 'difficult' (if, for instance, it is uncomfortable), it is reflexively dismissed, unsurprisingly perhaps, as 'marginal' or 'meaningless'. This is the form that cultural activity is allowed to take: the general attitude is that it can either deliver the goods or be consigned to the dustbin.

The **Festival** was intended as something by means of which 'creativity' and 'myths of genius' could be exploded. 'Plagiarism' provided a useful way of focussing on these concepts, but the practical manifestation of any critical awareness of their implications suggested that, to a large extent, the terms were defunct. In the light of the mishmash of plagiarised styles, unthinking parody and opportunistic involvement which the Festival attracted, it may be asserted that the concept which determined - and, it seems, still does determine - the 'cultural moment' was **taste**. It is in the realm of one's taste, hovering between the recognition of real needs and the reproduction of the fetishised likes, that one typically decides whether or not a work is worthwhile. What happened with the **Festival of Plagiarism** was that a united front of **diverse tastes** was presented to a body of consumers otherwise unable to make sense of the discontinuous and confused manifestations of a supposedly coherent radicalism. Broadly speaking, this society expresses its cultural self in terms of what it consumes, not in terms of what it produces. In other words, personal taste - the habits and likes of individuals, by which they define and nourish a unique identity, - now provides the measure of value, rather than the amount of labour time typically expended on an artefact (and, as a compliment to this, the amount of time which might be saved by the 'inspired' creator, by machinery, &c). Value in its classical-economic sense has retreated, though its rules have survived. The needs of this society remain obscure and available only in the form of semi-conscious, usually instinctive, urges to be met by ill-understood and, typically, de-meaning forces of control in the spheres of entertainment, 'politics' and so forth.

In other words, social needs are currently comprehended in terms of the inflection of power: the solution to the problem is seen to lie in the nourishing of a specialised elite equipped for the specific job — police, doctors, artists and so forth,

whose interests are formally aligned to those of the socio-economic system. The concomitant of these specialisations is the exercise of individual taste, the extension of which is the conception of an eager, expectant audience hungry for specialist fodder.

That there was very little understanding of the issues raised by the **Festival of Plagiarism** can be gauged from Walker's piece in the THES mentioned earlier. Walker's analysis, a naive display of ignorance complemented by a few shrewd guesses, raises some useful points which are worth exploring further (especially in the absence of ideas and discussion generated during the Festival itself); and it is symptomatic of the tendency I have identified as typifying the cultural moment - something which currently delays progressive action and which runs as an undercurrent through the majority of supposedly 'radical' left interventions. In Walker's article we glimpse the outlines of a consensus in left cultural activity based on a generalised ignorance of the political-economic dimensions of this commodity culture.

Walker identifies in the activity of the **Festival of Plagiarism** an assault on commodity culture (in contradistinction to the fashionable fascination with its 'infinite variety'). He compares such activity unfavourably to that of pop stars. It is a revealing comparison that yields much in the way of half-baked notions about radical popular cultural manifestations:

"Attacking originality is thus a means of undetermining the commodity nature of contemporary, private gallery art.

Consistency is hard to achieve: some of the new plagiarists issue their work in the form of small press publications which are then offered for sale in bookshops: hence they are as much commodities as tins of beans or paintings by Julian Schnabel.

In the pop music field young performers are more realistic in the assessment of the potential for iconoclastic gestures within the music business. The cultural revolt of punk... disturbed that business for a time but did not succeed in overthrowing it. Since then radical singers and musicians have, by and large, accepted the commodity status of their products/fame (as in Bob Geldof's case by placing them in the service of charity or in Billy Bragg's case by placing them in the service of left-wing causes), while accepting that those same products had exchange-values and earned profits for privately owned record companies." (John Walker, *Living in borrowed time*, THES, 22.2.88, p.13)

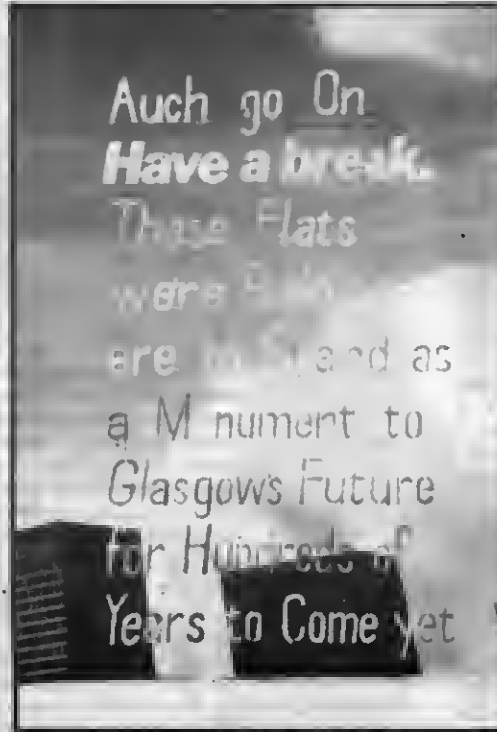
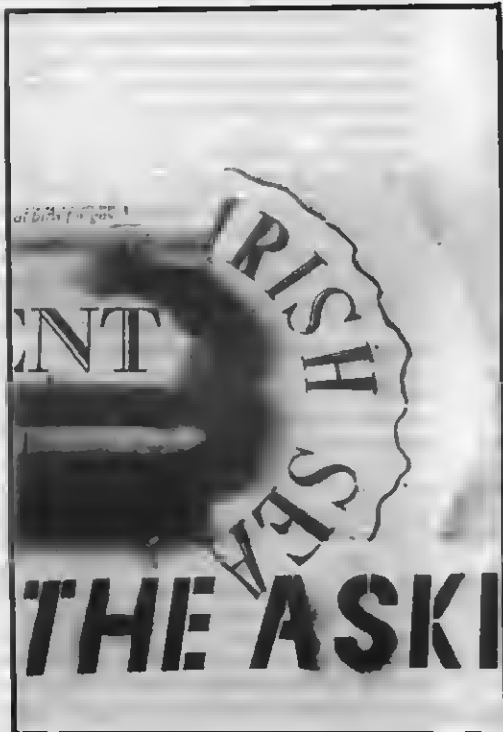
Stewart Home, writing in the introduction of the 'Plagiarism' booklet, remarks that "one of the problems inherent in left opposition to dominant culture is that there is no agreement on the use of specific terms". Even this state of affairs does not excuse Walker's clumsy and inaccurate analysis of the political-economic dimension of the cultural artefact; nor does it account for the complete lack of comprehension as to the nature of the 'radicalism' of the so-called



17/2/88 Hamilton St., Ormean Rd., Belfast.



27/6/87 Old Rutherglen Rd., Hutchesontown, Glasgow.



20/11/87 Dundas St., Buchanan's

8/12/87-17/1/88 St. Vincent St., Charing Cross, Glasgow.





29/10/87 Cathedral St., Queen St., Glasgow.



nan St., Glasgow.



16/5/88 John St., City Chambers - Tricolour.



19/10/87 Port Dundas Rd., Cowcaddens, Glasgow.





Baxter, Dickason, Hopton, 'Hoardings' Installation detail, Bedford Hill Gallery.

The Festival of Plagiarism, January 1988

'radical singers and musicians' whose acceptance of the form of the commodity is characterised as 'more realistic' than that of the recalcitrant and comparatively unknown - read socially useless - artists.

To my mind, this area - the question of one's attitude towards and understanding of the commodity status of the cultural artefact - is crucial, for it is not until cultural workers have come to terms with the psychological-economic aspect of commodities that anything resembling progressive action will be possible. It is a matter of regret that the argument advances so slowly because the terms in which it must be carried on are bandied about in Humpty Dumpty fashion by critics whose faculties are stunted by laziness and vested interest.

First, let me deal with the 'books, beans and Schnabel' remark: that a commodity is a commodity is a commodity.

We live in a commodity culture. There can be no undermining of the commodity except through commodities. The commodity is the form in which objects 'appear' to us. One cannot 'escape' the commodity culture (anymore than one can 'escape' from breathing air). One can at best subvert it, and project its eventual transformation, through the content of the commodity. To argue that a book is 'just as much a commodity' as a tin of beans tells us very little (anymore than arguing that a fox is just as much an animal as a giraffe - less, in fact, for it does not provide any information about the nature of commodities and their formal significance). At present, under the conditions we describe as 'capital', there is no choice but to work within the commodity culture - the formal monetary equivalence of commodities being part of the problem. No 'anti-art' or 'non-art' work could exist in the form of a 'non-commodity': what would be its terms of reference? Strictly speaking, non-commodity activity would be culturally invisible to us. The object's being offered for

sale is not the determinate factor of a commodity, though it is interesting that Walker (who silently accepts the perks of review copies) grasps artefacts from the vantage of consumption rather than production - that is, he implicitly defines the essence of the commodity as grounded in consumption. But this, even if one takes on board Baudrillard's more radical tenets, is ludicrous - though extremely widespread (especially in the area of 'popular culture', where how easily an artefact is consumed is often taken as indicative of its meaningfulness). The emphasis on consumption - on the exercise of taste - is part of an elaborate but essentially vapid theory of culture that, while it intellectually grasps a general social drift into passivity, fails to provide a context in which such speculations might be useful.

Secondly, to turn to the supposedly 'more realistic' pop performers whose results are so concrete. To describe the likes of Geldof and Bragg as 'radical' is an abuse of the term. In fact, their would-be radicalism is entirely undercut by their acceptance of the exchange value of commodities, an acceptance which undoubtedly nourishes the status quo. This remains a stumbling block. There can be no radical activity that does not at some level question the equivalence of commodities - how they relate to one another in terms of money, as commodities in the market: no radicalism, then, which does not constantly throw into relief the value system of western culture: a system which equates a booklet produced by educated people who can 'choose' what to do with their time; a Schnabel painting, a celebration of aestheticised alienation and fascination with the abstractions of the market; and a tin of beans, its container manufactured from materials mined by semi-slave labour whose life expectancy is little more than that of the shelf life of the beans.

Our tragedy is that we have become immune to the implications of such an equation. Cultural artefacts from (for instance) the so-called 'third world' articulate on various levels different value systems to our own, and because of this they spearhead new western fads and fashions. But inevitably they can only suggest the outline of our own inadequacies and tend to act as both panacea and touchstone of nostalgia. What is required for a change in social life that is more than mere revolt, is the development of a cultural praxis able to explode the commodity-centred value system that currently holds sway, economically and psychologically. The Festival Of Plagiarism was unable to suggest how this project could be realised: it provided a few clues, perhaps, but ultimately it proved too feeble to prevent its being recuperated by the art world. Like Poe's 'The Man of the Crowd', its subversive intentions could only be suspected, not gleaned from its displays of inertia: it proved vain to follow its trail across the city - and it was swallowed by the turmoil of the streets.

Note: A GDR Festival des Plagiats took place on 8-10 June 1988 at the Jochschule für Bildende Künste Braunschweig.

"PLAGIARISM: Art as Commodity and Strategies for its Negation" edited by Stewart Home, is available from Counter-Productions at £1.20 plus 30p p&p; 308c Camberwell New Road, London SE5 0RW. See also "Why Plagiarism" by Bob Jones in Variant 3.

review

COLLABORATIONS by Stefan Szczelkun Alex Richards

WHAT IS an art book? A collection of reproductions bound together by thick glue and a thin text? Or a weightier text by someone playing sorcerer's apprentice to the latest continental theorist? Neither is likely to provoke an actual response from the reader, because neither cedes the subject position to the reader. And mutual, collective activity requires a basis of common subjectivity.

Perhaps there is another possibility to document activities, to comment on their successes and failings, and hence to develop towards further activities. But does what is usually described as 'documentation' live up to this? Or does it express a fear of transience, a desire to convert the original activity into a tangible 'hard currency'? Like 'networking' documentation can become an end in itself, as Stefan Szczelkun notes in relation to Mail Art: "Often work is only glanced at by the artist before it goes into the archive... These archives seemed to me a dead space." (p.100) The identification and avoidance of such dead space has informed Szczelkun's artistic practice. A slogan from his early days at Portsmouth Polytechnic, 'Art Must Get Out!' combines with the commitment to collective work, to indicate those areas in which he is interested in working.

Over the past 20 years, Szczelkun has been involved in many attempts to establish and sustain the conditions for such collective activity. One example may set the tone. In 1971 he participated in the Scratch Orchestra. This had been founded by Cornelius Cardew, Howard Skempton and Michael Parsons, and defined in Cardew's draft constitution as "a large number of enthusiasts pooling their resources (not primarily material resources) and assembling for action (music-making, performance, edification)." Members of the Scratch Orchestra considered orthodox cultural activity to veer between private-language solipsism and a socialisation where everyone spoke only prices; enthusiastic collective activity appeared to offer a way between these reefs. Eventually, several of the founders concluded that 'enthusiasm' was insufficient and that the primary requirement was politics - leading them into a Maoist dead-end.

Throughout the 1970s, Stefan Szczelkun continued to involve himself in collective efforts in various areas of human life and interaction: from dance to shelter, and, towards the end of that decade, parenting -

which imposed a necessary pause to other activities. 'Collaborations' documents his resumption of activity in the visual arts area, in the early 1980s.

The first section of the book, 'Context, Image, Text: How oppression is mediated thru visual culture' deals with three projects intended to use the art gallery as only a base for explorations of aspects of the surrounding environment. In the first of these, 'Roadworks' (1985), the environment explored was geographical: that around the Brixton Art Gallery, of lesser or greater familiarity to the collaborating artists (Szczelkun, Hatoun, Araeen, Sherman, etc). In 'imMEDIacy' (1983) and 'Bypass Control' (1986), on the other hand, the environment was the immaterial, ever-present and elusive one of the enveloping media, also the reference point for 'Ruins of Glamour, Glamour of Ruins' and 'Glamour Lied to Me' (both 1986).

The book's second section, subtitled 'Spontaneous Culture Now! Working class history, social art, ritual and time' is perhaps nearest to the documentary norm, where the material gives little more than an echo of the activities described and photographed. The activities documented are consistent with those of the first section, dealing with attempts to recreate historic time and community. A new grasp of the mythic dimension is sought - a pursuit of a living identity and place, rather than the pseudo-life of the commodity. Out of the gallery and into the house, the street, the local. Attraction towards the local community festival or to the pantomime. And, in the end, locality and situation become symbolised in a portable wooden house.

The third section is entitled 'art is important... ARTISTS ARE MORE THAN IMPORTANT' and deals with the developments of various interlocking networks of art activists. Some of these concerns had earlier appeared in the 'Artists' Liberation: Rough Notes' which Szczelkun circulated in 1985. Here again, the search for locality and belonging reappears. An account of the early days of the BIGOS Group of Polish-British artists explores the adequacy of such a self-description as 'defining a shared basis for working together. As happens to all organisations, BIGOS now appears to have lost (or bypassed) that initial anguished search for a common area of experience and activity, with preparation for group shows now providing the main framework for shared

activity. But in his recurrent use of the mobile house in various performances and installations, Szczelkun has retained a sense of the provisionality of situation.

A very dissimilar area of interaction is also discussed: the international Postal Art Network crosses boundaries of locality and experience. As previously mentioned, a train-number collector mentality is a great danger. "My aim was to experiment with some more open and public use of postal art which avoided the pitfalls of accumulation and collectors" (p.100). This he did by placing material on walls, parks, etc. in his local community.

The book is completed by material from the 'PhotoDay Duets' (1987): photographs taken on collaborative photographic expeditions with various artists, many of whom had participated in the activities described earlier in the book. So in the end we have examples of the range shared experimental interests which can emerge in collaborative activity: a vindication of one of the book's arguments.

The book jacket asks such questions as 'Can working class culture produce serious art? Is there such a thing as a working class aesthetic?' Does it succeed in asking or answering these questions? The published material describes the projects, the participants' intentions and feelings afterwards, and the reactions of viewers and reviewers. The danger therein would be that it could become little more than a compendium of discrete project reports. Only in the second section does

this become a real danger, because the printed material can only sketch the original event (pantomimes, etc). In the main, though, the book successfully pursues a (re)creation of community through a collective activity which rejects the premise that 'culture' is a pre-determined object for contemplation. 'Working class' is used to denote both a shared separation from Mass Culture and High Culture and a desire to replace their passive contemplation with new forms of activity.

Various small presses are operating on the literary-political-artistic margins, trying to reach a readership committed to seeking out the unfamiliar. Not unreasonably, several have recently begun collaborating in, for example, *Counter-Distribution* and the *Small Press Group*. Such initiatives will only succeed if interested people support them by doing more than just browsing through the books, and instead read them and engage with their arguments. The best ways to obtain the *Working Press* books are directly from Working Press, 85 St. Agnes Place, Kennington, London SE11 4BB, or from Counter-Distribution, 308 Camberwell New Rd., London SE5 0RW.

review

CROSSEOVERS: Art Into Pop/ Pop In Art by John A. Walker

According to the British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data contained at the front of this book the text is supposed to be about '1. Art and Music. 2. Music, Popular (Songs etc) - 20th century-History and Criticism'. This classification is based on information that the publishers sent the British Library, and as such is not the responsibility of the author. Assuming that the publishers were not being deliberately misleading when they sent the information, then they presumably imagined that the book had something to do with music. The blurb on the back cover even claims that 'This is the first major survey (sic) of the links between the visual arts and pop music over the last thirty years'. Which is a very odd claim to make about a book that hardly even touches on the subject of music.

In his preface Walker tells us that 'the present text is descriptive rather than theoretical' without explaining how description can be divorced from theory and ideology. He follows this up with an introduction in which he 'defines' fine art as 'the "high" culture, visual arts of painting and sculpture; works by artists who have been trained in art schools and who show their unique artefacts in galleries and museums'; and pop music as 'the plurality of different types of popular music referred to by such terms as rock 'n' roll, skiffle, rhythm and blues, heavy metal, Motown, disco, reggae, soul, ska, funk, glam rock, punk rock, acid rock, progressive rock, art rock and electro pop'. Unfortunately Walker's descriptions are thoroughly inadequate. There are numerous practising fine artists who did not train at art school and/or who tend to produce work other than painting and sculpture - the performance artist Stefan Szczelkun immediately springs to mind as an example of both these tendencies. Equally many fine artists working outside the disciplines of painting and sculpture do not produce unique artifacts - for example those working in video, print making, audio and conceptual art.

It is hard to imagine why Walker bothered to give a definition of pop music, since his text does not deal with the subject. What Walker does deal with is the lyrical content of rock songs,

the packaging and promotion of rock records, fashions associated with certain rock groups, some of the theatrical aspects of pop culture - but there is no musicology in his book and therefore it is not a book about music. Walker's aim is to demonstrate that there is a beneficial interaction between pop and art - and since there is virtually no interaction between art and pop music he studiously avoids this particular subject.

Walker's main technique for demonstrating a relationship between art and pop is to list rock musician after rock musician who attended art school. No doubt this partially explains Walker's desire to define art in terms of art school training - but since, as we have already seen, his description of fine art is inadequate, it proves very little. What is actually required to understand Walker's subject matter is a class analysis. This is something Walker himself wishes to avoid:

"...cultural distinctions are all hierarchical; some would argue that, ultimately they derive from the class structure of society. This is not the place to explore such fundamental problems of aesthetics..."

If Walker's book was intended to be anything other than a pedantic reiteration of ruling class values, it would be precisely the place to explore such fundamental problems of aesthetics. Walker conveniently fudges the issue, but his entire text is based on the premise that art has universal and humanising function: *'...distrust of art is ... a sign of philistinism'* (page 108). Since such beliefs have no base in material fact, Walker does not trouble himself with explaining how he came to them.

The crucial factor distinguishing art from pop culture is the way in which the two are consumed. The bourgeoisie maintain an aesthetic distance between themselves and the art they admire - emphasis is placed on form and formal innovation - whereas pop kids identify with the product they consume; the stars they admire become a reflection of themselves (and many rock fans seek to emulate their heroes). Rock culture (rather than music) which is the area Walker has

singled out in his book, certainly appropriates material from 'high culture' but what Walker fails to appreciate is that when this occurs the material in question is not consumed as art but as otherness. The material appropriated from high culture is not appreciated in a detached manner but identified with; and this identification is then used to distance the consumer from other sections of society - primarily on a generational basis. By identifying with elements appropriated from high culture, teen-age rock consumers distance themselves both from the pop culture of their younger brothers and sisters and from the sentimental 'old world' culture of their parents. And since it is the mode of consumption that distinguishes high culture from popular culture, the material in question has ceased to function as art and has been effectively cleansed of its bourgeois origins.

John Walker is, of course, coming from the opposite direction - he is hoping to demonstrate his membership of the avant-garde fraction of the bourgeoisie by being able to consume popular culture as art. But Walker is unsure of himself, and as a result often ends up sounding more like a provincial school teacher than someone convinced of the vocation as a 'taste-maker'. His prose often reads more like an end of term report than the considered deliberations of an 'art critic', for example:

"John Lennon (1940-80) came from a lower middle-class, suburban background in Liverpool. Although intelligent he had a poor school record and was fortunate to gain a place at art college in the late 1950's... As a teenager he was ebullient, aggressive and irreverent towards authority. Part Teddy boy, part Beatnik, his major enthusiasm was American rock 'n' roll..."

To say that Walker's ideas are insufficiently theorised is to grossly understate the case. As we can see from from this extract, Walker substitutes the sermonising platitudes of a school master for the theoretical pedigree he lacks. Walker somehow manages to get taken seriously in the inbred world of British academics but fortunately he will never cut it with the street kids one presumes he hoped to reach with this book

Stewart Home

The Red Flag is raised outside Glasgow

THE LEADERS ARE BOLSHEVIKS AT HEART

Saturday, February 1, 1919.

THE "Daily Chronicle", discussing the strike, says: Disorders of this character had never occurred within living memory in Scotland's largest city. The Scots are an orderly people. There are, however, considerable, non-native element among the Glasgow workers, as illustrated by the fact that the moving spirit in the local agitation is a Polish Jew, and some of the others are Irish.

The authors of the strike are the same men who repeatedly tried to bring Clydeside war work to a standstill during the war, and they have made no secret of their belief in violent methods generally or of their particular sympathy with the methods and aims of the Russian Bolsheviki. British trade unionists will be very ill advised if they allow themselves to be carried away into supporting them.

The "Times" says: The men on strike in Belfast and Glasgow are the unconscious instruments of a planned campaign drawn up by "intellectuals" in the background, who desire to emulate Lenin and Trotsky and the "Spartacus" leaders in Germany.

The "Morning Post" says: It is not merely an industrial movement. It is an attempt at revolution.

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The strike officers not been reopened the enforced absence leaders, three of whom now in the hands police, no further action has been arranged.

There was no suggestion of a recurrence of orders, though the men with fixed bayonets on duty at the more vulnerable points.

REVOLUTION THAT FAILS

Military Ready: Another Leader Arrested

THE LATEST developments arising out of the Glasgow strike riots are the arrest of Emmanuel Shinwell (the principal leader in the agitation), and the establishment in the vicinity of the municipal buildings of fully equipped military guards ready to suppress instantly any further outbreak by the mob.

This precaution was, no doubt, in the mind of Lord Provost Stewart last night when, at a public meeting in the city, he issued a grave warning to the revolutionary element. "The authorities in Glasgow," he said, "will not shirk their duty. The resources of civilisation are not yet exhausted."

We learn from a special correspondent in close touch with the situation, that, in the opinion of competent authorities, the strike movement has failed. There has been little or no accession of willing strikers to the riots since Monday.

A strong cleavage of opinion has also occurred in the Joint Strike Committee, and the arrest of the leaders is further expected to bring the outbreak to a speedy finish.

It has been left to a newspaper to express surprise. Scotsmen, usually an orderly set, should allow themselves to be misled by a Polish Jew and by Irishmen who have no secret of their sympathies with the methods and aims of the Bolsheviks.

Further disorderly conduct took place in George Square, Glasgow, late last night, stones being thrown at the police and duty outside the City Chambers, several shop windows in other parts of the city being smashed.

Mr Lloyd George replying to a message from Mr Devlin requesting Government intervention in the strike, declines to take action, saying this is in complete accord with the Law and with the reasons which have induced the Government not to intervene in Glasgow. These reasons apply equally to Belfast.

There are signs that in other parts of the country the strike fever is subsiding. The Rosyth strikers have decided to resume work on Monday, and a similar course is expected to be followed by Dundee shipbuilders and engine

THE GLASGOW GARDEN FESTIVAL PLOT



Louise Scullion

Perhaps I should begin this article with an explanation of how I first became involved with the Glasgow Garden Festival.

At the beginning of June 1987 I was visited by Isabel Vasseur the Co-ordinator for the Visual Arts at the festival, who looked at my work and invited me to contribute to the festival in the form of a small garden. At that time I had been looking at the history of gardening, in particular at the times when this form of culture was most popular. I was attempting to discover if there were any particular social changes which brought about the spasmodic outbursts of interest in gardening throughout the centuries. I found that this interest usually occurred at the end of a civilisations history, when it had lost its political and military power and had turned its attention towards cultural strength. These periods were usually times of peace and prosperity, self-confidence and open-mindedness. Unfortunately, they left the society open to invasions by other 'less cultured' civilisations. This can be observed through the Aztecs, the Egyptians, the Moors and the French nobility at the period prior to the revolution.

I regarded the invitation to work for the festival as quite an honour and a great responsibility. I continued the ideas of my studio work and referred these ideas to more local events, in particular with regard to the power Scotland held, and how this was reflected in the landscape. I decided to make a garden which I would call 'The Firth of Clyde Garden'. It would appear almost as a miniaturised map of the Firth including Gourock, the Holy Loch, Loch Long and Glenfruin. I chose this area because it is where I grew up, and because, just as other designated areas in Scotland, it has become over-cultivated by the Military.

It is no surprise that Scotland now flourishes as NATO's second biggest member, in military terms giving it a status out of all proportion to its size and political power. (1)

One of the biggest growths in the area has been the Polaris Submarine Base at Faslane where the perimeter has expanded and the fences have become taller and more impregnable each year. We can still look through our fences at the busy little estuary, once renowned for puffers and paddlesteamers, but now thronging with submarines and navy patrol boats. It remains for us a top secret garden.

In Glenfruin another type of garden is taking form. As with Capability Brown's landscapes, rivers have been dammed, valleys filled, and hills levelled, all for the dispersal and planting of 'Trident' which is to be hidden under the grassy-terraced hills at Coulport. The road is to be landscaped over once Trident has been installed and we are informed that there will be no trace that the valley has ever been landscaped. The gardeners of Glenfruin do not, however, seem to understand even the simplest rules of Nature, as they have recently placed topsoil on mica-schist, which, with the first rain, slid away to leave the road knee-deep in mud. (2)

There seemed to be so many things happening to the land around the Firth of Clyde, that it made it easy for me to see it in terms of a garden, one which was being turned over and sown by the military. The military, it has been said appear to have seen Scotland as virgin soil, as a 'sparsely populated terrain suitable for military training. (3)

The American writer J.B. Jackson describes this feeling of control,

"I began to see that regimented landscape in front of us as a kind of formal eighteenth century garden, and the eighteenth century garden as the regimented militarised state in miniature." (4)

This seemed to articulate my own reasons for making the Firth of Clyde garden, also the fact that George Chessworth, the man overall in charge of the Glasgow Garden Festival was himself a military man, an ex Air Vice Marshall who was responsible for organising the first airborne assault on the Falkland Islands in 1982. (5)

Is Glasgow, once considered by some the industrial centre of the world, about to meet with the same fate as the Aztecs and the Moors?

The conclusion of my own involvement with the festival is that my design for the Firth of Clyde Garden was rejected as it was thought to have too many political undertones, and I was urged to come up with alternative designs which would not create any political waves. This instruction served to reinforce the possibility that J.B. Jackson was correct in his observations, and that now the Glasgow Garden Festival is the 'regimented militarised state in miniature'.

My participation in the Garden Festival now takes the form of a small metal bench called 'The Reconnaissance Bench' flanked by two restrained evergreens.

SOWING FOR A RICH YIELD

The Glasgow Garden Festival has been open to the public for a number of weeks now, and the city still waits to see if their expectations will be realised. Having received the government's go-ahead in December 85, and financial backing from them, the city now employs the Scottish Development Agency as their main organising team, who are using a further £15 million of taxpayers money, together with over £20 million in sponsorship deals with both private and public investments. By October there were rumours in the city that the budget now far exceeded the published amounts, and the figure of £50 million (approx) was hinted at, but this remains speculation as actual financial statistics available are very slow in being published.

The festival is the biggest event to be held in the city since the 1938 Empire Exhibition. The festival organisers hope to attract 4 - 5 million visitors to Glasgow, who will spend an expected £100 million. It is also hoped that through this experience they will shed their preconceived notion of Glasgow as a depressing post-industrial city, and instead have faith in it as a modern Renaissance City of culture, leisure and tourist excellence - as Glasgow the 'Dear Green Place.'

At a meeting of the Free University in Glasgow, an organisation that considers itself a body of free thinking people unconnected with any specific political party, Edith Hamilton, a community worker from Liverpool spoke of the necessity to question the festival's activities early on, and of the scale of financial investments being made, as it was only afterwards in Liverpool that the false promises of the festival were recognised.

It is probably a bit late in the day to be questioning the money already spent on the festival or to start taking lessons from Liverpool and Stoke — but is not too late to

look at the new image of Glasgow that is being marketed. In the lead up to Glasgow's year of cultural City of Europe in 1990 it is important to look at what sort of culture is being projected and who are the people designated to control the form our culture should take.

So far, when the media have looked at the under-achievements of the previous two festivals, they have put the lack of profit down entirely to bad marketing, but obviously there are other reasons for their failings and it is essential to realise as early as possible that the marketing cannot out-perform the product. If the product is not right then the people quite simply won't come. Dutch marketing director, Freek Bloemers, who was involved in Amsterdam, which last year was the cultural city of Europe, (a title which Glasgow is to inherit) said **"...you need a lot of energy to avoid it being an administrative exercise, or a business card on behalf of politicians". (6)**

The idea of the garden festival began in Germany, in war damaged Essen. It was intended to turn the country's bomb scarred wastes into permanent parkland. Nearly forty years later, in 1984, Liverpool played host to Britain's first ever garden festival. The festival was decided upon in January 1982 by the government at the encouragement of the then Secretary of the Environment, Michael Heseltine who saw the festival as a way of unifying the people of Merseyside after the riots of July 1981. The government employed the Merseyside Development Corporation to take over the organising of it, and a £1 million advertising campaign began to get under way - a further £29 million was spent on the festival itself. The main function of the marketing campaign was to present a whole new product for Britain, one complex enough to appeal to many different groups, in a city with a very negative image.

It was never considered advantageous that the £29 million spent on the festival might have been more sensitively used in understanding why the riots at Toxteth had occurred, and finding a more permanent answer to those problems. Instead the public money was invested in a temporary island of greenery described as a "different world" and a "horticultural Disneyland". Johnson & Co the firm in charge of marketing, went so far as to point out that even the recent media coverage of Liverpool's 'militant city council' had benefited the festival by keeping Liverpool, however infamously, in the public eye.

Perhaps one of the most important political implications of Liverpool's International Garden Festival was the threat to the future of local governments. The Merseyside Corporation was seen as a new form of government with the type of dictatorial planning powers of the new 'town planners of the green field sites', i.e. cultures which emerge on the planner's drawing boards and not through evolution and choice. But unlike these, the Merseyside Development Corporation works within the city centre, and its power has been at the expense of the existing local authority, and unlike the local authority, the Merseyside Develop-

ment Corporation was government appointed.

Liverpool's critics saw this as being a threat to local democracy and as an indication of future Conservative intentions, specifically as a **'Priming pump for private industry'**.

Tony Hood, Labour councillor for Abercromby ward spoke in March 1983 of his reservations about the government taking control out of local hands:

"...if it is seen to work here, then if they win the next election the Tories will cut public expenditure even more and hand even bigger sums over to these non-accountable corporations". (7)

In the light of the Conservative win at the last General Election, and despite the persistent Labour wins in Scotland, we should perhaps reconsider Tony Hood's ominous words. Is it possible that the Scottish Development Agency are now Glasgow's 'non-accountable' equivalent of Liverpool's Development Corporation?

The S.D.A. have now become well known for their 'imaginative spending', though some civic leaders have felt that the city was not trusted to improve itself. This seems to echo Liverpool's feeling of control being taken out of local hands.

THE OFFSHOOTS

Glasgow has now financially and physically ploughed its way through the winter, preparing for the springtime opening of the 1988 **'Festival of a Lifetime'** - we are to experience a **'Day Out Of This World'** in a festival which is to be **'a catalyst for investments and new developments'** which will bring new housing, jobs, and a better economy to the city, - but what sort of progress will a city with these expectations of a 'garden festival' make? - and what sort of culture will be projected in 1990?

George Chessworth, C.B; O.B.E; D.F.C; the festivals leader highlights the direction which he sees us taking when he wrote:

"It will be the largest, most prestigious consumer event in the United Kingdom in 1988". (8)

He hopes that all the businesses in the Glasgow area will take part, if not through sponsorship then through bearing the festivals logo on all items being manufactured in the area. Could Glasgow be turning into an 'Olympic type Village', there only to sell souvenirs to the festival visitors?

The City's clean-up is already underway. An epidemic of tree planting and sand-blasting has taken place, as well as prestigious buildings being spotlit. The roads to and from the festival as well as other tourist attractions are being made to look more appealing, but some of the

residents inside the facelifted buildings have complained of more urgent needs, highlighting dampness and bad plumbing (An example of this is one of the cities 'doss-houses' which falls in the festivals path and which has been newly sand-blasted.)

A different type of public cleansing has been going on at Glasgow's Garden Festival site where Bells Whisky, a subsidiary company of Guinness Breweries generously sponsored the making of the £1.2 million footbridge linking the Scottish Exhibition Centre to the adjacent festival site. This footbridge across the Clyde the first such bridge to be built for 130 years, is seen as a compensation from the Guinness group for the loss of sponsorship to the open golf championship at Gleneagles. Although a very public sponsorship, it could be recognised as coming shortly after the 'Guinness Scandal' when the firm bought over Bells Whisky, then reneged on the contract, sacking many of the previous Scottish employees.

The bridge is to be called Bells Bridge and is expected to be sited permanently further along the Clyde after the festival is over, where it is hoped it will serve as a permanent reminder of their company.

Other large sponsors have been the group of Scottish banks, who in the real tradition of macho banking architecture have been vying with each other to see who can sponsor the biggest, most monolithic advertisements. The Clydesdale Bank (under recent takeover by the Bank of Australia) look as if they will win with their £500,000 sponsorship towards the erection of the 240 feet high viewing tower. The bank also hopes that the tower will become a permanent fixture. The bank celebrates its 150th anniversary of its foundation in 1838.

Perhaps one of the most controversial, but least publicised mistakes to be made so far in Glasgow, concerning the festival, has been the complex and expensive land deals involving the Clyde Port Authorities, Laing the Building Contractors, and the Scottish Development Agency. It resulted in the C.P.A. selling their land to Laing, who then rented it out to the S.D.A. for the festival site for £1 million. In addition the S.D.A. then re-paid Laing for the inconvenience to their private developments by allowing them to buy seven pieces of publicly owned land of equal acreage to the festival site at especially low price. The whole affair has meant a loss to the taxpayer of £6 million and a huge profit to Laing, and it has been successfully played down to avoid any exposure by the media.

The upshot of all this is that the government appointed S.D.A. have by-passed local policies in that Labour had pledged not to sell publicly owned land to private developers, yet they were obliged to sell such sites to the S.D.A. who then resold it to private developers. The criticism at the time of Liverpool's garden festival regarding the Merseyside Development Corporation was that it had become:

"...a new Conservative quango ... aimed at mobilising enterprise to halt urban decay where traditional

local government had failed ... a test of 'no red tape here' tory efficiency". (9)

The parallel between this and what has happened in Glasgow seem to clearly justify the feeling of control being taken out of local hands. Local councillor Ian Davidson, from the garden festival advisory committee, confirmed these feelings by saying:

"...I'd have thought it was the S.D.A.'s duty to make sure that they did everything in their power to ensure that the land was not bought from under their feet at a time when they must have been very sure that the garden festival was in the offing or that at the very least under discussion. I would have thought some sort of enquiry would have been worthwhile. Clearly an opportunity has been missed here, and I think there is a responsibility upon us to make sure it does not happen again". (10)

Laing again came under further criticism, this time from Isobel Vasseur, who was turned down by Laing when she approached them for sponsorship for art works for the festival.

CULTURE

If the Glasgow Garden Festival is to play any part in the preparation for Glasgow the Cultural City of Europe in 1990, as we are told it will, then perhaps it is important that that we should look at those people who have to control how this 'image' should be portrayed.

Mr George Chessworth C.B.; O.B.E.; D.F.C.; the Chief Executive of the Garden Festival, sees his military training as being ideal for the stimulating, if more finite challenge of the Garden Festival, and despite the local criticism that many of the people with important decision making jobs having been imported, Chessworth points out that he sees himself as being Scottish by adoption in that he and his wife have had a long affair with Scotland, which began in the sixties when he commanded the First Nimrod Squadron at Kinross. His last appointment in 1980 was to Northwood as Chief of Staff and Deputy Air Officer. Chessworth retired to the R.A.F. base at Forres where he now lives with his wife and dog, Digger, a failed R.A.F. bomb sniffer and retriever (11). Should the job of organising a major Scottish 'cultural' event be given to a man whose only relationship with the land has been from a military viewpoint, when his aerial view has been via the radar screen? Perhaps when the S.D.A. appointed Mr. Chesworth they drew inspiration from J. B. Jackson who describes the relationship between the military and the land in the following terms:

"... there is a similarity between the way war organises space and movement and the way the contemporary society organises them;



Notes

- 1 Spaven, Malcolm — "Fortress Scotland". Page 2.
- 2 Bickerstaff, Harry — C.N.D., Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow.
- 3 Spaven, Malcolm — "Fortress Scotland". Page 1.
- 4 Jackson, J. B. — "Discovering the Vernacular Landscape". 'The landscape as seen by the military'. Page 136.
- 5 Collier, Andy — "Scottish Field", January 1986. Page 36.
- 6 Glasgow Herald, 6/12/87. Page 4.
- 7 New Society: Jeffrey, Steve. 'Liverpool's wilting garden', 3/3/83.
- 8 Glasgow Garden Festival press release.
- 9 New Society: Jeffrey, Steve. 'Liverpool's wilting garden' as above.
- 10 Peat, David — 'Down the Line', Channel 4, 14/1/87.
- 11 'Glasgow — The Real Flower of Scotland' — "Scottish Field", January 1986.
- 12 Jackson, J. B., 'A military man looks at the landscape' — 'Discovering the Vernacular Landscape'. Page 135.
- 13 Jack, Ian. "The Re-packaging of Glasgow".
- 14 Glasgow Herald 26/11/87. Page 3.

that is, if the military landscape and the military society are not both in essence intensified versions of the peacetime landscape, intensified and vitalised by one over-riding purpose which, of necessity, brings about a closer relationship between man and the environment and between men". (12)

His special qualities of organisation and leadership, as well as the management of people would seem to be of great use at the festival. Isobel Vasseur Co-ordinator for the Visual Arts for the festival has felt limited, however, in who may be included to exhibit at the festival. Many works have been felt to be too political under the umbrella of the Chessworth controlled sponsorships. This was highlighted by the lengthy debates on whether to allow the inclusion of the Peace Garden exhibited at C.N.C.

Vasseur herself has come under criticism. At a meeting in October, held by Vasseur, artists complained of isolation and of receiving no backing, both moral and financial. Vasseur admitted that many of the works she had sited faced the danger of becoming 'zoological specimens' in the context of a Walt Disneyish display. The controversy over the siting of the art works continues, when a month before the festival was due to open Richard Deacon (this year's winner of the Turner prize) threatened to withdraw his exhibit unless the urinals which have been inadvertently fixed to the side of the massive stone plinth on which his sculpture is situated were removed (they still remain, as does the sculpture).

There is no doubt that after the terrible depression of the 70's Glasgow was in desperate need of rejuvenation, and it might be argued that it appears to be happening — some Glaswegians have welcomed the new Renaissance with extraordinary outbursts of civic pride, although on the other hand, others feel that the "cultural renaissance" is nothing more than a grandiose exercise in self delusion. They feel that the culture which now emerges is one which reinforces and simplifies the class system.

"where there are people who aspire, and people who can't or won't."

Alternatively, Nigel Lawson commented:

"...There are people in Scotland who quite simply have a hostile attitude to wealth"

Whatever presumptions are made about Glaswegians, questions such as 'is this what we want' or 'or is this what we choose' have not widely been addressed. Moreover, the issue remains one of who controls our culture, and who will be accountable for it.

A BALLOONIST'S STORY

Karen Eliot

Dun = grey — how appropriate thought karen as s/he dodged the vicious thrusts of spiky-edged broileries bristling along the narrow pavement. The Victorian heaviness of DC's doorway was always more crowded on dreich, cold, winter mornings as employees surged to get in out of the wet. Karen escaped from the damp confines of the lift at the 2nd floor - comics. Karen eliot was the balloonist on the Dandy. A tedious job with no prospects, recognised within Thomson's as a woman's preserve. Unskilled. Men are artists, not women. Karen didnt give a shit for the archaic principles within DC's for s/he was an artist in her/his own right although s/he could never hope to be recognised as such.

The jagged ring of karen's doorbell stabbed through the downy silence of morning. Karen eliot fought off the cruel reality and stretched without opening her/his eyes in the vague hope that someone else would answer the door. Again - then shortly afterwards, again. Fuck. The word formed in block capitals in karen's mind. S/he could see the word - feel the reluctance to move. Obviously the postie: obviously an urgency.

Karen tugged open the half-glass door letting the cold London air brass it's way into the lobby. An irate-looking postie glared at a half-clad karen eliot while thrusting a substantial bundle of mixed correspondence at her/him. "Thanks" said karen, closing the door while the GPO person stepped through the hydrangea bushes and across the broken lattice fence onto nextdoor's path. karen eliot recognised the largest jiffy bag as coming from the states. Packages from her/his youngest mailart friend were always exciting. Neglecting to dress, karen opened carefully but hastily the large envelope to reveal a week's amount of stained nappies (diapers). Each was dated and timed. The signature in either piss or shit; sometimes both. A strong odour of excrement and baby products invaded the stuffiness of karen's bedroom.

A gentle march breeze tugged at karen's dark, naturally curly hair as s/he ran along Riverside. It was her/his 25th birthday (a tuesday) - the first day of her/his new training regimen. As from today s/he would stop taking all drugs and alcohol. Stop having sex. And become a vegetarian. Her/his chest felt tight and her/his breath, though deep, came in painful pants. But s/he felt good and confident in the knowledge that in a few weeks time s/he would feel a new power. Karen eliot was fired with an enthusiasm to make a great performance (when the time came) which would assert her/his personality on the world.

In DC Thomson's the power filtered down like precipitation - cold and wet. At the top, the penthouse; beneath that the boardrooms and offices; on the 3rd floor (upper), the male artists and on the 3rd floor (lower), illustrators and women artists; on the 2nd, comic staff, pasteup and balloonists; on the 1st, accounts and finally on the ground, mailing and distribution. The company hierarchy was blatant and brutal. One could not fail to recognise one's place as soon as one started. An elitism operated that segregated all staff. The canteen had invisible barriers that no-one dared to breach. However, despite this in-house structure, no artist in DC's could ever be recognised as an artist within the artworld. The artists in DC's bowed down to the "real" artists outside. Even Dudley Watkins - the god - the comic king - the only artist DC's had ever allowed to sign his own work - was not recognised as an artist within the giddy heights of the artworld of important galleries, myths, legends and colossal price tags. Karen eliot gave 2 fingers to all artists.

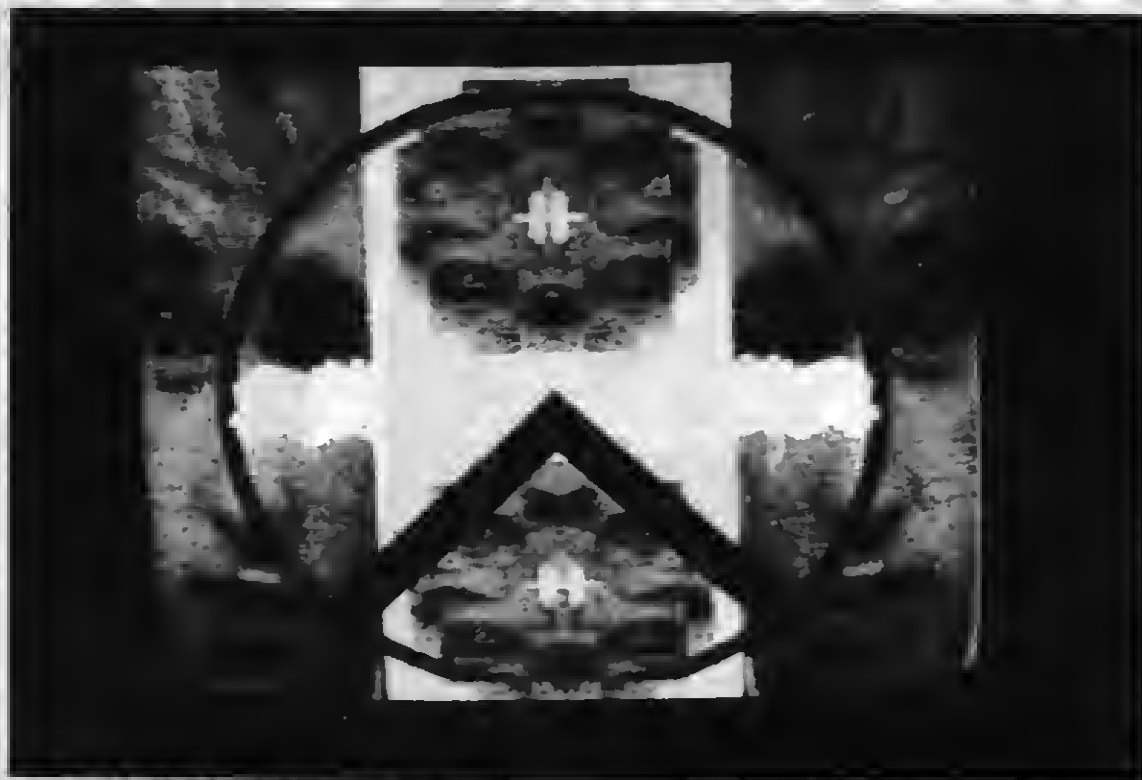
By 10:30 karen had opened and digested her/his days mail; breakfasted on weetabix, toast and tea; fed the cat and dressed in her/his usual attire. Karen's room was inside a large Edwardian house which s/he shared with 3 more persons and Corky. On the first landing, next to the bathroom, with a pillar-box red door, was karen's room. It was approx. 15 feet square. One wall was occupied by a large sash window, another was lined with well-stacked shelves containing books, mailart catalogues, magazines, comics, audio cassettes and hundreds of small plastic toys. The ceiling was 12 feet above the cluttered floor which accommodated her/his small single bed, a plain wooden table and two kitchen chairs. The white ceiling offered the only undisturbed area of calm in the entire room. The rest of the walls were totally papered by karen's mailart.

Karen eliot pasted all her/his 2 dimensional mailart s/he received systematically onto the walls. This was done as a continuous action. Karen was now mid-way through the third layer. It was her/his intention to leave this installation in the house when the final notice to quit was served by Hackney Council. Mailart was not a thing to archive, store and gather dust. For karen, it was a living thing. A medium to work and create with. These reasons meant mailart could never be totally accepted by the artworld. Karen was very glad of that.

Art was not something that karen eliot had ever thought about making. S/he had gone to the type of schools that taught a kid to be

street-wise, hard and capable of enduring a life of poverty, violence and unemployment. Art was definately for snobs: those kind of kids who stayed at home with paints instead of being outside looking for action. When karen stepped from her/his teenage angst over the threshold of her/his 20s into a deeper rut of eternal dole s/he began to feel a desire to make a mark. S/he began consciously and deliberately to plan her/his action. Karen read numerous books and magazine articles and as a kind of crude research which finally led her/him into the realm of performance art. Although s/he was distrustful of art and it's closed universe karen fell in love with the romantic myth of immortality concluding that what s/he was about to undertake was indeed an art action. Karen's statement however, would be more dramatic, more dynamic and more dreadful than any kind of artshit.

Karen eliot pressed her/his arse onto the small swivel chair's fake leather seat (it squeaked) and selected a disc. S/he booted up the amiga. While her/his pale, slender right hand closed familiarly over the mouse's plastic shell her/his equally pale and slender left hand flicked a switch on a small surveillance camera mounted on a desk-top stand. With another insitinctive movement of her/his left hand s/he activated the monitor that was linked to the video camera. Simultaneously the amiga's drive creaked arthritically. The mouse twitched as karen's two fingers played quickly on it's two flat buttons selecting menus from the powerful graphics package. With everything ready for action karen placed an image of an aborigine s/he had found in National Geographic, while waiting in the dentist's the previous Wednesday, under the camera's black and white eye. The image appeared on the monitor. Although s/he had never trained as a painter in an art school, karen did what came naturally and began to apply colour to the found image on the monitor then transferred a section of it to the VDU. This portion s/he used as a brush building up a complex arrangement of shapes both flipped on the X & Y axes and repeated across the VDU. Her/his agile fingers darted from the command line interface to the mouse — left hand to right. Her/his mind sharp as a razor cut through numerous options selecting tools, cancelling — then click OK. Click OK. After an hour karen had created a complex series of animations contrived from the single found source (the aborigine) and was now faced with the choice of whether to store or delete. What the hell, thought karen and saved to disc. Although s/he was not 100% pleased with the overall piece karen had liked one or two



Still from a Karen Eliot computer animation 1988.

sequences. S/he found these again and held them static on the VDU. On her/his left sat her/his latest pride and joy — a full colour laser printer. Karen was currently putting together a portfolio of still images which s/he had sealed in plastic thereby rendering them virtually indestructable.

By 14:00 karen had worked her/his mailart most suited to the walls into the on-going design; placed 26 small plastic toys received from Taiwan among the ranks high on the ornate plaster frieze circling the room; incorporated 10 small plastic babies from various mailartists around the world into her/his collection now occupying 5 shoe boxes; filled the numerous orders for badges for attention; completed the memorandum for 24:3:88 from Robin Crozier; had a lunch of beans on toast and tea; watched part of a video received from Ben Allen; blown up a balloon received from Tony Lowes which carried the slogan "Give up Art" and was contemplating a script from Pete Horobin for 1:4:88 being a mailartist was certainly exciting and far from dull. One never knew what would invade one's letterbox to challenge one's creative bent. Karen corresponded regularly with around 200 mailartists. Some initiated projects to participate in; some exchanged small press, artworks, cassettes etc; some organised mailart shows on specific themes; while others merely wrote letters thereby exchanging correspondence leaning heavily on the emphasis of one day meeting and going LIVE. Karen eliot knew that this fulltime creative action added up to art of some description and that s/he was an artist but s/he also recognised the fact that s/he would never be categorised as such by the artworld - nor did s/he ever want to be.

On the first monday of may karen finished designing invitations to her/his public performance. The image s/he had used was a photograph taken by her/his mother

with a brownie box-camera of a five year old child clutching a large patterned balloon as though gripping life with grim determination. As yet karen had not fixed a time or date nor had s/he decided on a mailing list but had settled on a venue. Of course s/he wanted all her/his friends to be there, the press, tv cameras and maybe even an art critic or two. For the first time in her/his life s/he was conscious of her/his own inner power. The stoical training had begun to take effect.

Every evening and at the weekends, karen eliot dedicated her/his time to image processing. Karen had thousands of images on disk as well as small animated programmes in full colour. It was her/his desire to expand the animated sequences by adding sampled sounds and dumping the programmes onto VHS cassettes for accessibility and distribution. Although karen had a passion for art and loved to create her/his own language s/he regarded all artists as wankers and galleries as sterile rooms full of poorly plagiarised copies of art as seen in books or third-rate substitutes for the real life experience. Karen often asked her/himself is s/he would show her/his computer art outside of her/his own bedroom. In many ways her/his denial to show her/his work made it stronger. There was no need to have her/his work justified by impartial criticism or accepted by the artworld because karen knew, only too well, its true worth. Her/his art was better than anything s/he had seen anywhere. A silent pride swelled inside her/him and s/he exuded confidence. The shittiness of her/his job was easily suffered by the thrill of a paycheque. Supposing karen had wanted to show her/his work there was no gallery in Scotland equipped to handle it. And, because karen had never been to artschool nor had any experience of galleries nor received an Arts Council bursary, s/he doubted if anyone would pay

her/him much attention. The art world, karen knew, was as elitist and fragile as DC Thomson's.

By 19:00 karen had fulfilled 3 badge orders. Occupying the majority of karen's plain table surface was a well-made one inch badge machine. It stamped badge components together with artwork, one at a time. Karen had owned the machine for over a year and was, by now, adept in its usage. S/he could make between 100 & 200 per hour depending on the design. Sometimes an order would arrive from a band wanting promos all the same. Other times some person would demand a thousand all different. This small industry supplemented karen's meagre allowance from Social Security. In between making badges — a tedious job — karen had washed some clothes, played a new audio cassette from John Berndt, watched Blockbusters and the news, fed Corky and consumed her/his evening meal of mashed potatoes and baked beans, a strawberry yogurt, 2 digestive biscuits and a pot of mixed fruit tea.

It was now June (a thursday) and karen stared hard and long at the date s/he had just written — 8:8:88. It had a finality about it. A wholesome, unchallengeable certitude: it was immovable and above all: right. Flicking through the pages of her/his well-filled diary-come-notebook karen stopped at the page — 8th august 1988 — a monday — the start of a new beginning.

Recurring questions persistently sounded in karen eliot's inner ear. Is a penguin a bird despite the fact that it cannot fly and warble or nest in a tree? Is an artist still an artist if s/he is put into prison and denied access to materials? Is an artist still an artist if all her/his work is totally destroyed? Therefore is a person an artist if her/his creative output is not recognised nor categorised as art? Karen knew the logical answers and

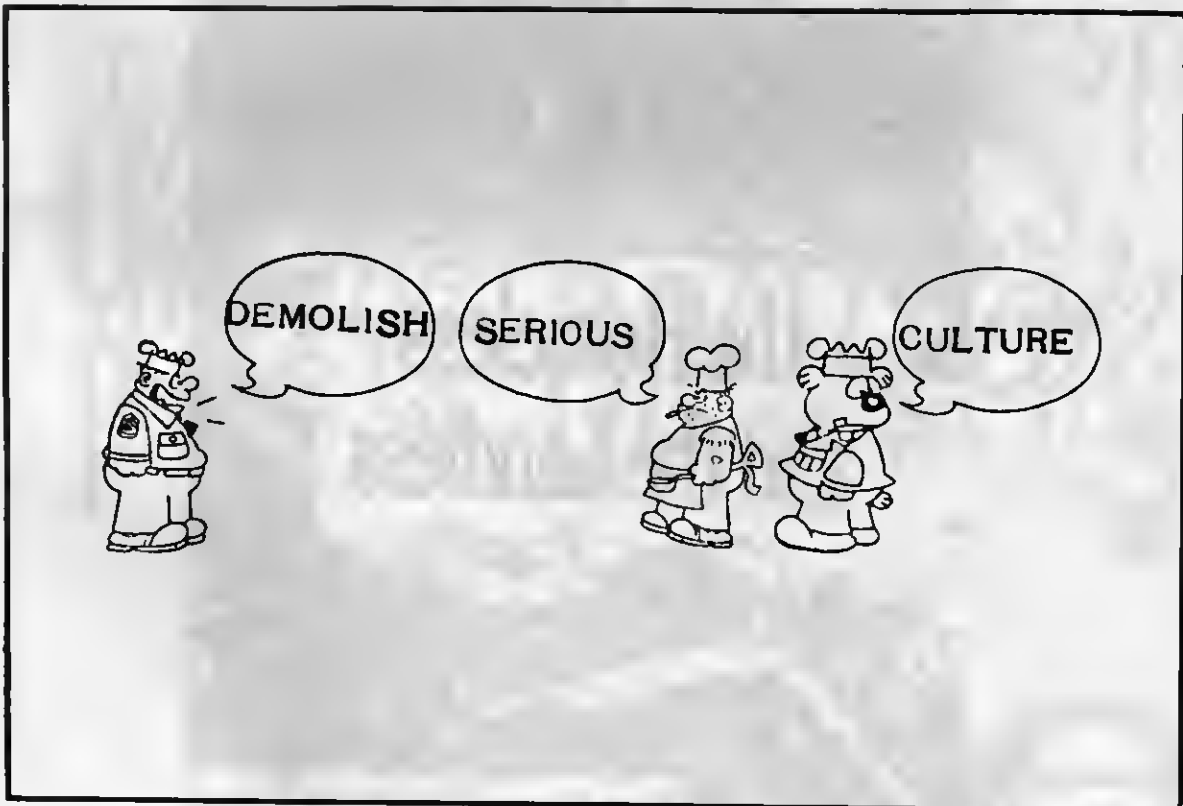
founded her/his faith upon them. Many of karen's friends on the dole occupied their time in very creative ways encompassing musical, visual and literate talents by making cassettes and small press productions to pass around in a free-flow of ideas that both stimulated and entertained. Of course none of this output challenged the established artworld but it was more popular and accessible. This alone made it more important, stronger and more sincere. This populist artform found its own level, surviving if it was good by outliving the crap and becoming a collector's piece if it made its point directly and beautifully. Karen felt that so much bourgeois art only existed for commercial reasons divorcing itself from the ordinary human qualities of life. 90% of it was a waste of time just as 90% of all wo/man's gestures were. Another question which remained unanswered; was the remaining 10% worth keeping and preserving. By 23:00 karen had made a decision to stay at home instead of meeting friends down the boozer (pints & dole & mailart did not make for a happy economic mix), had a bath, read the new vague, had a drink of caro, brushed her/his teeth, made her/his final piss of the day and got into bed over tired to read. It had been a hard day. An art day.

Naked, karen eliot fell through space seeing across the rolling verdant pastures of Fife and the dazzling ribbon of Tay

pinned to Dundee by 2 slender bridges. Her/his arms spread wide, like Yves Klein, noble and free for the first time in her/his short life. Her/his daily training schedule had given her/him the necessary energy and strength to succeed. 16 floors beneath her/him an area approx. 10 feet square had been roped off in the car park void of vehicles due to karen's performance. A number of curious groups and individuals stood around idly chatting or quietly soaking in the summer sun. Most of them had seen the installation consisting of personal memorabilia and the detritus of everyday living. Now they waited restlessly. Spread out on the tar macadam was a white cloth stencilled with the legendary date on one corner and the time of 12:00 (it was now 11:50) in the adjacent corner. Opposing this and also stencilled in black was the artist's name. The final corner contained the address of the venue — Tayside House, Dundee. A row of children's toys, battered by love, were lined along the sheet's top between the date and the time. Down the left side, neatly arranged in lines, were assorted family photos showing karen from infancy to maturity. Between her/his name and the address, clothes were folded as though laid out for inspection — socks, underwear, shirts, jeans, a pair of trainers, a bomber jacket and a jersey. Up the right side, as though to confirm the artist's everyday existence as an ordinary person, were used toothbrushes, empty cartons from popular brands of household products,

a half-used bar of soap, nail and hair clippings, pieces of soiled toilet paper, a urine sample, a syringe of blood and the diary-come-notebook opened at it's final entry, 7:8:88. The centre of the sheet was empty thereby acting as an area of infinite possibility. Karen could see her/his family, innocent of the shock they were about to receive. Two policemen loitered casually at the carpark's gateway. No-one — least of all the art critic from Edinburgh — thought to look up for a moment. BBC's outside broadcast cameras stared blankly around the area waiting for action. Everyone expected karen to appear from street level and do a regular kind of boring art performance, then collect the usual accolades. The impact created by a falling body suddenly stopped by a hard, intractable surface, caused some of the objects to be disturbed.

With some annoyance and disappointment karen eliot closed the glossy art mag. S/he had not read it all — a cursory browse had been enough to tell her/him that its contents were no different from any other. Articles and interviews supported by predictable photographic documentation were punctuated by the usual gallery and magazine ads. There was no mention of the kind of new artforms that karen was interested in nor anything about the artists that karen personally knew. This sorry rag offered no variation. Karen tossed it into her/his waste bin with contempt.

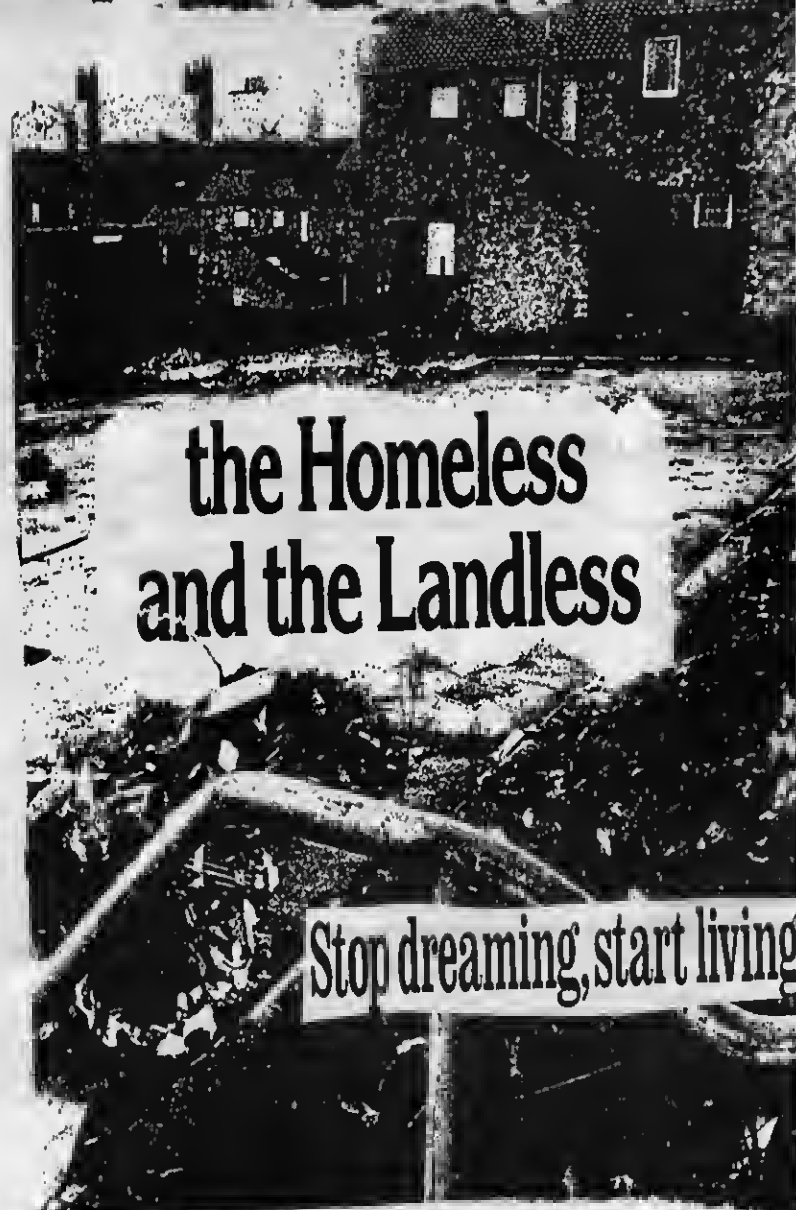


Mail Art Piece by Karen Eliot.



Preparing people for change

A testing time for modern education



**the Homeless
and the Landless**

Stop dreaming, start living

mētaphy'sical (-z-) a. & n. 1.

a. of metaphysics; based on abstract general reasoning;
over-subtle; incorporeal; Supernatural; VISIONARY;
(of some 17th-c. poets, esp. Cowley and

Donne) addicted to fanciful
conceits and

IMAGERY; far-fetched

LY² Jado. 2. n. (esp.
in p.) the M^s,

the metaphysical
poets. [f. as foll. + -AL]

8

PAVEL BUCHLER: HISTORICAL HANDSHAKES:

Toned with Gold

Chris Titterington



A few people have noticed that this is the **Fin de Siècle**. Everyone knows that the end of the century is supposed to be a time of pessimism. This time around much of that sort of feeling is mixed up with attitudes we call postmodern. Postmodern pessimism covers a lot of ground, but within the arts an important aspect is the supposed end of originality. To underline the point we make use of preexisting images and texts. The last time around, at beginning of this century, as a response to the **Fin de Siècle** artists re-emphasised a primitivism that we now call Fauvism, Cubism, Expressionism or whatever. Although today some of us have again chosen to wear the primitive mask the gestures seem empty and knowingly self-conscious. It appears then that our own **Fin de Siècle** has closer affinities with the end of the eighteenth century. They looked about then and saw originality at a low ebb and genius wanting in the culture as a whole. What to blame — surely it couldn't be their own fault? The cat they found to kick was language. And now we blame it too. Like them we complain that language makes us remote from experience. It intervenes. We say that we are abstracted from the world and that language is part of the never-to-be-lifted veil that mediates and constructs experience

show someone reaching down to pull someone else up? To save someone from falling? Perhaps. Or is the point more specific referring to the problems of context? Is there a clue in the prominence he gives to the precious hand-crafted gold toning? Are we invited, perhaps, to see the photographic traces of the real events — the handshakes — as museologically privileged moments from the past (the found appropriated image is, after all, necessarily retrospective). Conventional invention may indeed be philosophically impossible for certain artists but is Buchler here ridiculing that position?

Maybe the most important question in all this is just that — what is his precise orientation within these ideas. In the act of presentation there is always the possibility of approbation or censure. In this context we might call the attitudes 'melancholic' or 'pragmatic' Postmodernism. In some ways the former is a celebration of our presumed position of remoteness and relativistic uncertainty — a sort of fashion melancholy.

It appears as if, in a society that accepts or at least tolerates contemporary art, once denied a sense of alienation from society, such it could be that it is a ploy to enable a semblance of disengaged criticism to be maintained. In contrast, the pragmatic orientation points to our state of removal within a world that we construct for ourselves in an effort to change that world. It holds what it considers to be unhealthy constructions up to the light for inspection. Today it is most commonly concerned with sexuality.

We may be able to gauge Buchler's attitude from the way he treats his found imagery as if it were precious. In some ways this seems inappropriate, and might be thought to be used ironically to poke fun at the persistence of the elevation of craft skills in the 'Fine' arts. And yet it perhaps does no harm to take him at face value. This may also have its uses. We might see, for example, the use of the precious toning metals and the hand-made paper as indicating that so called secondary experience harms us as pandering after the old high modernist ideal of immediacy. Or, again, it could be said that the lost originality proclaimed in the use of found imagery is in fact regained during the various photographic processes the 'original' undergoes; that the ways in which these generative stages inflect the image with qualities foreign to its found state in fact constitute a kind of natural growth which ends in originality.

Finally it is perhaps significant that Buchler should choose the handshake as his example of the meaningless signifier.

For the constellation of ideas we call modernism is first and foremost founded upon utopian golden age myth of a better world achieved by a return to a paradise that existed before consciousness — a healing of the fall. We see this in the desire for immediacy, the attempt to lose the mediating conscious mind arrived at in the fall, and a return to direct experience. It is to this little piece of self-deception — all 200 years worth of it — that in postmodernism we kiss goodbye. Buchler's handshake becomes a wave.

What if Pavel Buchler's work is concerned with these questions? **Historical Handshakes** is certainly made from found images. It shows us a form of the most simple visual language. But these handshakes are rotated through 90 degrees. They become signifiers that fail to deliver their conventional meaning. Do they now





AN INVESTIGATION... KAREN ELIOT

He'd had a hard day trying to track down some audio tape made by women. It was soon to be presented on the telephone network and he needed to check it out before it got the go-ahead.

"How had things got so liberal?"

"GODDAMN WOMEN!" He thought.

Their move into the technological field of video, tape/slide, film and now sound had been a crafted one. It's recent development and short history meant they could get in on it from the start. The use of 'anti-classical' techniques could turn their 'denied tradition' into an artistic counter programme. The potential for a FEMINIST AESTHETIC was quite frankly, worrying.

But that wasn't all..... "to enter the magnetic field of the tape and the field of the imagination" "a shift of attention from the visible to the imaginary.."1. served to undermine the whole visual arts practice! "OOOOOOOOOAAAAAAHHHH!" He groaned.

He poured himself a scotch and lit up a cigarette.

He gazed out of the window.

A message came over the answer-phone. It said: "This is a recording".

He listened.

.....
The sound of trains pulling in and out of a station.

A woman's voice.

Telling a story.

He pictured her.

Her body.

Her presence.

There.

Still.

Looking straight ahead of her as she spoke.

The simplicity of it.

A woman.

A voice.

A story.

The subtlety of the narrative.

A neat political analogy.2.

.....
He threw his head back and laughed.

HA!

He wasn't seriously worried was he? A few stories told over the telephone-network was hardly going to rock the foundations of the art establishment.

Just a bunch of women talking amongst themselves, telling each other their histories, their struggles.

"WOMEN. SUBJECTIVE. SUBVERSIVE. IRRATIONAL. NARCISSISTIC BEINGS."

.....

A silence closed in on him.

A heavy, oppressive silence.

Broken;

Suddenly shattered;

By a voice, a wail.

A singular powerful cry, so full of strength that it swamped and filled the air with energy, tension and power, forming and taking shape as it left the body.

It was a woman's cry.

Her lament.

A tragedy was revealed.3.

.....

He turned and hurled his glass at the answering machine;

But it continued to play;

And in a soft whisper and with childlike naivety;

Another woman's voice began;

L is for like ; laugh ; lips ; lovers ; lost ;

O is for offer ; our ; often ; over ; only ;

G is for great ; get ; give ; giggle ; girl ;

I is for into ; inside ; if ; invite ; intimate ;

C is for care ; can ; catch ; caress ; cuddle

As if a child were reading across the page of an early- learning book. As if the words were forming a set pattern, a framework in which a new meaning and understanding could develop. The words, free from appropriated meanings and learned values, yet inspired with emotion and feeling.

STOP.

.....

He imagined;

.....in a darkened room, a mouth, the only visible thing, moving, possessed by a life of it's own; correcting, repeating and amplifying itself. Telling a story. The story of a woman, never acknowledging that they are mouth's own experiences. Words tumbling out uncontrollably. Pent-up words of a lifetime. She pours out her confession. Gabbling on the fine edge of hysteria. The pace never slackening. The brain can hardly catch what the mouth is saying. The mouth denying any knowledge of what the words mean. Intermittantly refusing to believe that they mean anything.5.

.....

He imagined;

.....in a darkened room, a mouth/HER mouth, sucking on an electronic device, manipulating a voice/HER voice, deep-

ening and lowering the tone and pitch, feigning a masculine identity, mimicking and mocking some down-town-cool-sleazy-dude.6.

.....

"GODDAMN WOMEN"

He felt nothing but contempt for them.

He knew their tactics were subtle and calculating; their demands appearing on the surface to be modest and reasonable. YEH! just a few simple stories.

But, they were adopting an analytical approach towards language;

A concern with representation through language; and

An interest in the "re-covery" of the mother-tongue, a lost tongue.

Searching for clues and traces of the past. STORIES/SOUNDS/TONGUES: closer to their own bodies and experiences.

A language of their own desires.

A consolidation of their identity.

.....

HA!

He threw back his head and roared with laughter.

.....

1. From the supporting essay for "Sound Moves" by Marysia Lewandowska.

2. "Tree Story" by Marysia Lewandowska from "Sound Moves".

3. "Chant Down Greenham" by Alanna O'Kelly from "Sound Moves".

4. "Henno" by Mari Gordon from "Sound Moves".

5. "Not I" by Samuel Beckett. A play in one act.

6. "Big Science" by Laurie Anderson.

"SOUND MOVES" IS AN AUDIO TAPE MADE BY NINE WOMEN ARTISTS INVITED BY SHARON MORRIS AND COMMISSIONED BY PROJECTS U.K. BEING PRESENTED OVER THE TELEPHONE NETWORK. MAY-SEPT. ARTISTS AND WORKS:

MARYSIA LEWANDOWSKA - "TREE STORY"

CAROLINE WILKINSON - "BACK WORDS"

SHARON MORRIS - "INTERFERENCE/ TRANSFERENCE"

MICHELLE.D.BAHARIER - "EVERYDAY"

JAN KERR - "AWAY"

ALANNA O'KELLY - "SEDITION"

MARI GORDON - "AM I A REGIONAL VARIATION"

ANNA O'SULLIVAN - "CHANT DOWN GREENHAM"

MAGGIE WARWICK - "HENNO"

"MOTHER"

"THE PAINTING"

THE FORTRESS OF ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL by PAUL WOOD

Modern Painters appeared in early 1988. The first issue was an ambitious production, in excess of a hundred pages and with a batting line-up extending from Prince Charles and Lord Gowrie to Brian Sewell by way of Roger Scruton and Sir Roy Shaw. But its characteristic voice and preoccupations were those of its founder, editor, and general Guiding Hand, Peter Fuller. A lot of work and money went into getting the production and distribution sorted out. And it was successful. The claim is the first issue sold 10,000. Reviews like this testify to the 'debate' Fuller stirred up, and consciously set about stirring up.

The critique of modernism is obviously too multifarious to admit of any accurate 'starting date'. In many respects post modernism has been a creature of the last ten years. Yet Rauschenberg's 'flat bed' works of the 1950's were cited by Steinberg as post modern art. Categories of convenience, such as the 'proto-post-modern' have been dreamed up to salvage work which otherwise might be marooned in the now shallow modernist swamp: cubist collage for example. Similarly with Surrealist photography. And constructivist graphics. Amidst all this though, it is hard to think of an exception to the rule that critics of modernism have seen themselves as offering a radical rewriting of an increasingly

conservative orthodoxy. Much of this is bound up with the development of political and cultural theory since, say, 1968.

Poststructuralism has been one dominant voice. Whatever their considerable differences, writers of this stripe have seen themselves as going on beyond the closures of High Modernism and orthodox marxism, to investigate an opened-up politics of representation (as opposed to a narrowly conceived representation of politics), and its inscription by and through variously gendered and raced subjectivities. A plethora of authors, artists, and journals have developed these arguments: 'October' is perhaps the most long lived. A different tendency has been represented by Art-Language, and the development of a social history of art in the wake of Tim Clark's early work: these enterprises' main distinction from the former have been their continued focus on analytical philosophy, and on a developed sense of historical materialism and class analysis. None of this is hard and fast, and some curious recursions have evolved: troubling or challenging, according to where one stands. Not least has been the reappraisal by some social historians and critics of the legacy of 'arch modernist' Clement Greenberg eg. the excavation of what Clark called his Eliotic Trotskyism. Or the attempt to insist on a connection between the project of an adequately modern realism and the relative autonomy of art. Much of this, needless to say, has tended to tread on the toes of the more enthusiastic moralisers and publicists of new-new left(-ish) cultural practice.

These two broad tendencies are of course not alone on contesting the space left by the break up of the hegemony of that paradigm of art making most concisely signalled by Greenberg's own 1962 paper 'Modernist Painting'. There have been for example attempts to breathe life into a thinned-down legacy of social(ist) realism in both the 70's and 80's. But that notwithstanding, the variety of approaches owing a measure of allegiance to one or the other, or even to a combination of, post structuralism and historical materialism have seemed actually to constitute that which is moving in the culture now. None of this is simple or unitary: the Saatchi gallery is one instance of its complexity and loose-jointedness, Art-Language's paintings perhaps another. But somewhere in and through that constellation - which is not a consensus - a conception of a radical, rigorous and, it only by force of contrast, 'progressive' critical culture has been worked.

All this is necessary by way of a preamble to considering Modern Painters. For it

stands not merely outside but resolutely against any such constellation of practical and critical interests. It is the first, or if not the first than by a long way the most ambitious, conservative intervention in artistic debate for a generation. This is the paradox. From the Situationist International to Trotskyism, from theory of ideology to psychoanalysis, advanced debate on art, conducted against the tenets of modernist orthodoxy, has been of the Left. Yet at the same time in the wider world, under the triple impact of economic recession, the most reactionary government for half a century and the weakness and ineptitude of oppositional leadership, the political culture of this country (in the sense of the UK as a whole, not Scotland alone) has been moving to the Right. Modernist Painters is the creature of this gap.

Whatever hawkish political accoutrements it might have assumed (and the person of Greenberg himself provides the richest instance of the contradiction: from Trotskyist opposition to imperialist war, to McCarthyism, to advocacy of the bombing of Vietnam) 'Kathedermodernismus' priced itself on aesthetic radicalism. The substance of the argument between Modernism and its opponents in the 60's was the possession of true artistic newness. For Lucy Lippard the works of Jules Olitski might have been "visual muzak"; for Michael Fried they were the most profound emotional expressions of their time in painting or any other art. Quality had nothing to do with popularity. In fact to court the latter was to be debarred from the former, reduced to mere novelty. This multiple lack of fit between cultural conservatism, aesthetic innovation and populism has once again opened up a space wherein forces can oppose the cosmopolitan, internationalist and socially careless rhetoric of Modernism from the Right. Furthermore, what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, or rather gosling: it powerful conservative voices can assail modernism for its disregard of national culture and public taste then they can do the same, and with still greater conviction and success for the diverse and uneven products of the postmodern.

Here however a note of caution has to be sounded. The foregoing situates Modern Painters unequivocally as a system of cultural conservatism. Not so its editor, Peter Fuller. This bears investigation. For Fuller has in a recent reply to his critics (Art Monthly, May 1988) been effectively able to sidestep their charges because of the clumsiness of their assimilation of aesthetics and politics. He has only to point to Roger Scruton's attack on Gilbert & George, or cite his own demand that the Saatchi collection be "eradicated" to drive a wedge between at least Party-political allegiance and aesthetic commitment. In fact the nature of his criticism of John Berger, to the effect that Berger's left wing criticism of the shibboleths of high art anticipated and paved the way for the present Tory government's weakening of support for the arts, however misplaced it might be, should point to the need to penetrate beneath the surface of Fuller's advocacy of Sutherland or Crevier. It is far too easy otherwise for Fuller to turn the trick by claiming that in their failure to analyse their reliance on

cohabitation with "philistines of the far Right" viz. Collectors like Saatchi and Turner prize winners like Gilbert & George, it is his critics of the Left who are inconsistent.

This is treacherous terrain. The ground underfoot is rocky and fissured and the ideological mists can come down in an instant. But if anyone is going to do an adequate job of criticism on Fuller's enterprise, which probably means, it carries on, doesn't run out of steam and begins to constitute an actual organisational rather than merely theoretical closure (by which time it might be too late...) - then they will have to try and unravel the constituents of a quite complex world view. In his Art Monthly reply, Fuller still refers to 'socialists' using the first person plural. He offers a rehearsal of some of his political commitments ranging from opposition to apartheid, capital punishment, nuclear weapons, uncontrolled market forces and a defence of the Welfare State which would probably situate him to the left of centre in the current Labour Party, which incidentally he claims to "still support". In earlier discussions, such as an extensive interview on the relation of Art and Politics of 1985, he has pilloried Althusserian marxism for its critique of the subject and its ideologism while expressing equally committed support for Timpanaro. It is not only philosophical conservatives who can occupy such a position, or one close to it - as recent work by Alex Callinicos on agency or Norman Geras on human nature may testify. In his 1986 article 'Against Internationalism', which could virtually stand as a preface to Modern Painters, Fuller concludes with an invocation of Raymond Williams' notion of a 'structure of feeling', focussed on conservation and ecology and the general issue of the relation of the human to the natural which he deemed "essential for the survival of the world". It is to this which he claims a British national school of art focussed on indigenous landscape traditions can contribute. It is worth noting here that in contrast to the aforementioned purchase in critiques of modernism on race and gender, and on class, this emphasis on nation is at the heart of Fuller's intervention; whatever the left-ish trappings of some of his claims however it is also worth pointing out that this is not, in any tenable sense at least, a Gramscian invocation of the national-popular such as finds favour in some sections eg. Scottish or Welsh nationalism, or the Marxism Today wing of the CP.

Yet all this notwithstanding, pleas about the autonomy of the aesthetic and the political ring hollow when set against a list of contributors including not only the obvious heir to the throne, an ex-Tory minister, and the editor of the Salisbury Review, but a Fellow of Peterhouse and the art critic of the Daily Telegraph. The relative consistency of these allegiances goes a long way to undermining any disarticulation thesis. Actions may not always speak louder than words but in the present climate that set of companions would have to be bound and gagged not to raise the ideological decibel-count. But the central thrust of Modern Painters is a set of aesthetic preferences. And it is ultimately onto the ground of taste that criticism must proceed.

There are two aspects. The former is perhaps contingent, but nonetheless telling for all that: the sheer tastlessness of Fuller's relentless self-promotion. How anyone can carry a half page advertisement for five of his own books (two of the "acclaimed" volumes available post free to subscribers) in a journal over which he has complete editorial control, and containing a description of himself by Waldemar Januszczak, of all people, as displaying "a breadth of knowledge and intellectual commitment to discovery which puts every other British art critic to shame", simply beggars belief. No less do the fawning and solicited 'letters' from thirty selected spaniels of British Art. Thus R.B. Kitaj: "...the title is wonderful. I believe that you will carry the main burden of achievement because the memorable magazines have turned on the energies of one person. I'm thinking of Eliot at Criterion, Leavis at Scrutiny, Kraus at Die Fackel...". Enough?

The other aspect, of course, goes to the various artists and critics whose praises are sung in Modernist Painters. It isn't so much the mere fact of the celebration of Fried, Moore and Bomberg by a variety of worthies, nor yet that of Sutherland, Lowry or Creffield by Fuller himself that sticks, as the terms of that approbation. In an admirably open article written in 1972 Rosalind Krauss tried to describe her increasing detachment from the paradigm of Greenbergian modernism, and attempt to come to terms with a set of responses to contemporary art which simply did not square with the theory. She cites various examples of work (eg Richard Serra's sculpture) and tendentious concepts (eg. Fried's 'presentness'), but at the heart of her disagreement was the divergence of the sense of reflexivity and permanent self criticism which she took - rightly, I would say - to be pretty close to the centre of the modern consciousness, and the dogmatic certainty which had come to characterise the judgements of Modernism. If there is one quality which sticks out of Modern Painters like a sawn-off branch, it is its blissful almost religious conviction of the virtue of its own preferences. The dogmatic assertion, time and again, of the 'aesthetic' as attaching to works of the chosen ones, and the 'aneesthetic' in which everything else lies mired, has a kind of bewhiskered authoritarianism to it that reeks of claustrophobic tradition. Fuller may genuflect every few sentences in front of Ruskin, but other stern ghosts loom out of the shadows, each knowing what is best for you, Reith, for one, or at least what that legacy became: a kind of Joadian or Gilbert Harding-like sham of propriety over desperate squalor and unhappiness. There is something unsightly going on when Fuller psychoanalyses Lowry's white-ish townscape backgrounds in terms of his mothers milk and the concomitant lost unity; or when he celebrates Dennis Creffield's clichéd, graphicky renderings of the Gothic cathedrals as "surely one of the most significant achievements of English draughtsmanship, indeed of English art, since the last war and perhaps long before that...a means of revelation and celebration of that which lies beyond the reach of sense". Modern Painters is about getting the lid back on, and it isn't alone in that. All that Ruskinian

cant about grace and spirituality and god as the missing centre truly marks the entry of Victorian Values into the art debate, whether Fuller votes Tory or not.

That is the trouble in the end. Fuller likes to conjure up a curiously hybrid image of his enterprise composed in equal parts of David and Goliath and the Silent Majority. The spectre is of Cosmopolitan, International Modernism Inc. whose shadowy hand slides simultaneously into the gloves of state and big business. Yet the targets are mostly take. His 'aesthetic' attack on the likes of Berger, Schnabel, and Gilbert & George has all the unintentioned comedy of a straw man dashing himself against a barn door a yard away - and falling right through it. Even this pales when, in his defence against the critics, Fuller solemnly girds himself against...the art critic of Time Out???

Running rings around easy targets with claims about the irreducibility of politics and art and the priority of the aesthetic grants a kind of specious radicalism to the project not unlike that deployed in the political sphere against 'spendthrift town halls' or 'local government bureaucracy' in favour of the 'right of choice'.

The lie at the heart of the project is just this: under the rhetoric of freedom is the reality of closure. Hitherto Fuller's left-ish critics have not made too good a job of it, not least because of the beams in their own eyes. In a perfect world Modern Painters would not have happened. In a decent one it would be beneath contempt. In this one it may just have to be addressed. If so it will be a thankless task. The hope is that the art it supports is so manifestly dull and bankrupt that the whole project will wither on the branch. Realistically, in the current social and political climate, with the dominant interest groups in play that seems unlikely.

In a recent issue of the Salisbury Review itself (April 1987) Fuller argued under the banner of Kenneth Clark for what he called "positive discriminating patronage from above". In other words the suppression of a range of experimental/postmodern/avant-garde art by the simple device of cutting public funds: not a device which has failed to impress the powerful in other fields of late. Victor Burgin and Art-Language were mentioned by name. Stark contrast indeed to the approbation meted out in Modern Painters to Graham Sutherland's portraits of, inter alia, Winston Churchill, Lord Beaverbrook, Kenneth Clark and Lord Goodman, in an article which ends with a quotation from no less an authority than St. Paul on the proper attitudes to Good and Virtue. As the editorial somewhat threateningly puts it: "contemporary art in this country is by and large administered by those who feel no particular affection for this nation or its people". What is being advanced instead is an art which can allegedly "minister to the human spirit even in these troubled times", sponsored by those in whom inhere "responsibility, taste and judgement". The missing term is 'authority' or 'order'. Irrespective of Fuller's professed intentions, a reactionary magnet is being forged. In times of openness, it would be an appendage. In times of reaction, it may yet become a real obstacle.

review

SKIN MYTHS ON THE LEVEL OF THE REAL:

Third Text - Third World Perspectives on Contemporary Art and Culture

(Kala Press, £3.50, Quart)

In the words of **Frantz Fanon**, "each generation must ... discover its' mission, fulfill or betray it ... But the native intellectual who wishes to create an authentic work of art must realise that the truths of a nation are in the first place its realities."

Fanon essentially wrote from a French philosophical tradition, committed to a form of literature didactic, descriptive with a rhetoric violently assertive. To him the truth of colonialism was the reality of systematic exploitation which created and perpetually reinforced the feeling of inferiority among the 'colonized people'. The Black Skin implodes with the power of the White Mask - always remaining the exotic, primitive, colonized Other.

Language mirrors the complex matrix of social reality, which as a discourse is one full of tensions, conflicts and struggles for self knowledge in a political climate which at present oppresses the identities of those involved in cultural activity who are perceived as threatening and consequently threatened. Antagonistic to this pervasive atmosphere, **THIRD TEXT**, edited by **Rasheed Araeen**, as a literary journal focusing on the visual arts, aims to create a critical space within which dominant discourses in art and culture can be contested and challenged in ways which delineate the methods which divide existence into polarised opposites which do not mutually recognize the existence of the other (ie white/other, woman/artist, black artist/artist) and consequently deny them/us the power to be acknowledged readers and writers of texts outwith a marginalised position which is simultaneously historical and cultural. (the same is true for the political arena)

The title, **THIRD TEXT**, itself is problematic and richly provocative. The **THIRD** signifies Third World for which a multiplicity of representations exist in the media-controlled understanding of this which is limited by the general acceptance that it refers to certain geographical areas, people and cultures who share a history of colonialism and are subject to neocolonial domination now.

Lorna Waite

Despite the brutal force of the West in terms of financial control and industrial exploitation, the homogenisation of identity, a convenient economic myth, does not succeed as a result of cultural differences. In the light of the extent to which the consequences of 'differences' effect cultural practices and the tendency of the West to define these as Same or Other, then questions of art cannot be divorced from questions of politics.

The notion of culture as a more authentic representation appears problematic, according to Araeen, "since it relies on a notion of equivalence whereby cultures are seen as simply different without attention being paid as to the nature of these differences in relation to the globalised and dominant culture of the West". Without analysing, questioning and resisting the ideologies underpinning the definition of cultural differences, we cannot understand the historical process which results in the exclusion of non Western artists from the history of modern art. Indeed, it is the central achievement of racist ideologies that race has become synonymous with national frontiers and operates by the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. Acknowledging that the position of the artist is complexly determined by characteristics of nationality, race, gender, and class within a context defined by the institutional needs of the marketplace, exclusion can be legitimised under the banner of *ethnic absolutism*.

Araeen in his article "From Primitivism to Ethnic Arts", describes the manner in which the support for Ethnic Arts and Ethnic Minorities in contemporary Britain is rooted, implicitly in a discourse that bears the hallmarks of neo-colonialism. Against a backdrop of the history of Modernism which sought to eliminate difference and create an internationalist cultural arena recognising self-representation, diversity and mutual awareness as common goals and valued assets in any dimension, the presence of various cultures within this society has led

to the development of a benevolent multiculturalism which relies on the maintenance of a separate status for black people based on cultural differences. This recognition however has led to the subversion of demands for an equal multiracial society within the mainstream of political and cultural life and has powerfully transformed the Other into a minority cultural entity which is both exotic and different.

As Paul Gilroy has suggested, culture is not a fixed and impermeable feature of social relations, its forms change, develop, combine and are dispersed in historical processes. For the black diaspora, modernity may have helped to raise issues and discover ways of developing a sense of being and belonging by the validation and authentication of black culture which had a historical and temporal perspective rooted in memory and the reconstruction of history.

The progressive force inherent in this position informs not only black struggle but that of the women's movement also. Seeking to undermine the prevailing political ideology, the energy of resistance becomes subsumed in an area where the position is delineated not in terms of superiority or inferiority but merely that of difference; a culture with imagination, strength but alien to the "community of the nation".

Refusing to confer on culture the definition of that which is racial, ethnic or national, essentially nothing which is absolute, the critique of **THIRD TEXT** plays with historical shifts in the meanings associated with race across time and space whilst attacking the collective consciousness of Western society which confers "power" through lack of legitimation. The existence and penetration of many expressive forms of culture into the dominant one means that it is impossible to theorize (i.e. "black" culture in Britain) without developing a new perspective on culture as a whole. This means the affirmation of a syncretic culture which cannot be done without protest, agitation or the acceptance of the plurality of histories and methods of cultural expressiveness outwith that which is valued by fine art institutions and reactionary politicians. (Modern Painters/The Vigorous Imagination). Third Text therefore rewrites the text which has many voices to speak and many historical and political claims to make.

To return to the words of Fanon, perhaps we could adopt a criterion of truth as that which resides in the enhancement of the feeling of power. Power by means of reading **THIRD TEXT** is to explore the personal and cultural from a narrative of conflict and exposition of that which determines the alienated position both historically and in the present. Art as well as expressing dissatisfaction with reality also comments on the historical process of art production and exchange, on the use of certain mediums according to historical placement and ultimately in the context of the desire for some sort of coherence amidst chaos. **THIRD TEXT** illuminates that which can be hidden and in doing so enriches by searching for the lost co-experiences.

THE DESTRUCTION OF ART AS AN INSTITUTION: *THE ROLE OF THE AMATEUR*

Peter Suchin

part one

We begin with a generalisation:

One of the most salient features of Modernism was its critical relation to the culture and society from which it emerged. With the work of the Cubists or of that of Joyce or Eliot the Nineteenth Century model of 'truth to nature' was severely challenged. This attack upon realism was taken further by the activities of the Dadaists and Surrealists. Peter Burger has claimed that for these groups the issue was not merely one of questioning certain forms adhered to by more conventional artists but was, rather, one of attempting to destroy the institution of art itself (1). It is our contention that this concern, insofar as it can be isolated, is a more radical project than those attempts — by, in their very different ways, Lukacs and Adorno — to produce aesthetic theories which could salvage certain forms of art for the Revolution (2). Lukacs promoted the idea of a revolutionary, critical realism, whilst Adorno advocated 'difficult' abstract work as the only mode of art which could resist the false society of Late Capitalism, resist it through the deliberate refusal of direct communication. The paper will attempt to outline and defend certain aspects of the attack on the institution of art, with particular reference to a number of theoretical assertions. Attacks upon the institution of art from within art itself, such as the work of Duchamp or the

closely related work of the so-called conceptual artists of the sixties and seventies will be largely ignored. We hope to show that dismantling the art institution is a project more directly compatible with left-wing interests than the various attempts to theorise a left-wing art practice as such.

Marxists are concerned to bring about a radical and far reaching transformation of society, replacing the divisive, biased culture of capitalism with a social formation based on considerably more egalitarian lines. Marx termed this free society in which the distinction between the producers and consumers would be eradicated 'communist society'. He viewed the realm of the aesthetic as something which was a fundamental part of being human, and not merely as an aspect of life to which only certain people — artists and their admirers — were suited. Put another way, human beings are fundamentally creative. In the capitalist workplace the worker, forced to repeat over and over again the same simple activity is alienated from his or her own 'essence'. Intellectual and manual activities are kept apart and the emphatic satisfaction which results from carrying out each and every aspect of a given job is not forthcoming. Furthermore, the worker is consigned to a very limited form of life insofar as he or she is expected to stick to a

particular activity to the more or less total exclusion of all others.

In sharp contrast to the debased worker stands the artist, someone who carries out all the numerous activities necessitated by the making of a work of art. Intellectual and sensuous practices are not pitted against one another but operate in unison. The artist's labour is unalienated labour. Thus, whilst the Artist-Genius of bourgeois culture still presents, by his or her 'expertise' the division of labour inherent in a society divided into producers and consumers it is still possible to see in such a dedication to aesthetic activity a model, albeit distorted, of the future human subject. In Marx and Engels' **The German Ideology** we find the following passage:

The exclusive concentration of artistic talent in particular individuals, and its suppression in the broad mass which is bound up with this, is a consequence of labour. If, even in certain social conditions, everyone was an excellent painter, that would not at all exclude the possibility of all of each of them being an original painter...In any case, with a communist organisation of society, there disappears the subordination of the artist to local and national narrowness, which

arises entirely from division of labour, and also the subordination of the artist to some definitive art, thanks to which he is exclusively a painter, sculptor, etc., the very name of his activity adequately expressing the narrowness of his professional development and his dependence on division of labour. In a communist society there are no painters but at most people who engage in painting amongst other activities. (3)

This quotation may be fruitfully juxtaposed with another from the same work:

In communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic.⁴

These remarks are, in some senses, utopian projections, the outline of a possible but hardly inevitable future society, one in which the full potential of each and every human being is unleashed. Is there today any evidence apparent which might suggest that the destruction of the hierarchy which Marx and Engels despised might actually come about? It appears that with regard to the field of art and aesthetics such evidence does in fact exist. It has been pointed out by a number of writers sympathetic to Marx's work - among them Hans Hess, Raymond Williams and Roger Taylor⁵ - that the belief that something is or is not 'art' - with all the resonances of superiority that the term implies - arose in the Seventeenth Century and is currently undergoing some kind of crisis or dissolution. Taylor, for example, argues that the term 'art' is employed as a means of conferring status upon a select number of things and concerns which are part of high bourgeois life. The title of his book - **Art, an Enemy of the People** - itself calls up his thesis that things which have been labelled 'art' are thus labelled only by route of a certain snobbery and feeling of superiority. In attacking the art concept Taylor does not mean to belittle the making of paintings, music, dancing, the writing of fiction (and so on); it is the organisational forms which surround such activities that he is keen to criticise. 'Works of art', he writes:

...are identifiable as such simply because...social processes have fixed onto them the label 'art'. That this is the sole ground for something being art is demonstrated by the fact that to be accepted within the appropriate area guarantees that something is art, and by the fact that the reasons for and explanations of acceptance have, over the centuries, been so diverse that acceptance cannot be anything other than arbitrary.⁶

Elsewhere Taylor supplies two examples of this conferral of status. The first concerns the objects produced by primitive Craftsmen:

Primitive art is art simply on the grounds that the high bourgeoisie has assimilated such works into the category it has created. In fact, as we know, this assimilation is very recent and it has involved the removal of such objects from museums to be rehoused in art galleries. The point at which the high bourgeoisie takes up the objects is the point at which they enter the category of art.⁷

He continues:

Another significant case of this is the gradual incursion of Pop music into the category of art. At the point at which the high bourgeois press creates space for Pop, comes the haggling as to its aesthetic status. Fifties Pop doesn't enter the upper middle class world and so there are no pedantic debates as to whether the performers are the new musical avant-garde, - whereas sixties Pop does and so the debate begins.

The concept of art is then, like all concepts, a concept with a specific history, one which is indexed to the manipulations of a specific social group. In what follows we shall be concerned with what is essentially an attack on that concept.

part two

In a talk given in America in April 1957 Marcel Duchamp made the following remark:

...the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in context with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act. This becomes even more obvious when posterity gives its final verdict and some times rehabilitates forgotten artists.⁸

Some years later, in the context of an interview with Pierre Cabanne, Duchamp practically repeated his earlier claim:

The artist makes something, then one day, he is recognized by the intervention of the public, of the spectator; so later he goes on to posterity. You can't stop that, because, in brief, it's a product of two poles - there's the pole of the one who makes the work, and the pole of the one who looks at it. I give the latter as much importance as the one who makes it.⁹

Duchamp's remarks have some correspondence with a tendency which has been particularly noticeable in theoretical work done in France since the 1960's, mainly in and around the avant-garde journal **Tel Quel**. What is being emphasised, both in Duchamp's pronouncements and in the theoretical work to which we refer is the importance of the viewer's or reader's contribution to the work of art. French theory has indeed consistently stressed the work and involvement of the reader in the production of the work of art. No longer the passive recipient of meanings and values imposed by the Artist or Author the reader is considered as **producer** of the text. Many recent and contemporary works of art - a good example would be Joyce's **Finnegans Wake** - are put together in such a way as to demand an active recipient, a reader who in effect **writes** the work. The most important proponent of the reader-as-writer thesis and a thinker whose work will be the main focus of the remainder of this paper is Roland Barthes. Barthes wrote some twenty books but he is most often remembered for his short essay of 1968, 'The Death of the Author'. At the end of that essay Barthes wrote:

Classic criticism has never paid any attention to the reader; for it, the writer is the only person in literature. We are now beginning to be fooled no longer...we know that to give writing its future it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author.¹⁰

The refusal of the Author-God in favour of the reader suggests a desire to democratize the text, to open up the work of art to multiple interpretations. The reader becomes a practitioner. Speaking of his own intended shift from the role of critic to that of novelist Barthes remarked:

I put myself in the position of the subject who makes something, and no longer of a subject who speaks about something: I am not studying a product, I assume a production...the world...comes to me as...a practice: I proceed to another type of knowledge (that of the Amateur).¹¹

The theme of the amateur appears at many points in Barthes' work and is an important one for our study. The amateur is, as Barthes puts it in his autobiography, 'someone who engages in painting, music, sport, science, without the spirit of mastery or competition... he is anything but a hero... he is - he will be perhaps - the counter-bourgeois artist'.¹² The amateur is not defined by an inferior technical competence but by a form of production which does not demand public recognition. It is a question of personal and disinterested investment. Barthes himself made over seven hundred paintings and drawings which he refused to exhibit despite the public exposure he could easily have claimed for his work through his fame as a writer.¹³ This idiosyncratic interpretation of the amateur interlocks with another of Barthes' concerns, what he calls the **writerly** text. The opposition between